



Collaborative research across institutions

Section 8: *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*

“Researchers involved in joint research must be aware of, and comply with, all policies and written agreements affecting the project, particularly those relating to the dissemination of research findings and the management of research data and primary materials.” (NHMRC et al 2007)

Scenario

An interdisciplinary team from eight universities wins a large, prestigious grant to pursue research on a sensitive topic of interest to the higher education sector. The lead institution negotiates the ethics application to ensure that any sensitive information gained during the research does not have any undesired or ill-considered effects on individuals or institutions involved. Each of the eight research partners agrees that all data will be ‘non-identifiable’ and that any findings will be reported in aggregate form only. Once the data has been collected, the findings indicate that the issue of concern is one which reflects very positively on each of the eight universities. The researchers receive multiple requests from their senior managers for this positive data to be made publicly available at an institutional level. The Chief Investigator reminds research partners that their ethics agreement precludes such disclosure.

Points for discussion:

1. How is the ethics approval process managed for collaborative research across institutions?
2. Who is responsible for ensuring that ethics protocols are followed carefully: the Chief Investigator, research partners, others?
3. Why is it important to adhere strictly to ethics approval documents? What might be a negative consequence of not doing so?
4. Who is responsible for managing/storing research data and primary materials once a research project is concluded?

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. 2007. *Revision of the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice: Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, Canberra: Australian Government.

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