

# Telephone Interviewing (Human Research Ethics) Procedure

## Section 1 - Introduction

(1) All unsolicited telephone contact made by the University's researchers must be conducted in accordance with the [Telecommunications \(Telemarketing and Research Calls\) Industry Standard](#). In addition, researchers using telephone interviewing should be aware of its methodological implications and ensure that they meet the requirements set out in this procedure.

## Section 2 - Procedure

### Advance Written Advice

(2) As a general rule, the target population should receive advance written advice and an information sheet to forewarn them that telephone contact will be made.

(3) The information sheet should meet the usual requirements for participant information and include:-

- a. how names, addresses and telephone numbers of the target interviewees were obtained;
- b. if a particular interviewee is preferred and why;
- c. details of the nature and types of questions to be asked;
- d. when the interview will take place and its expected length;
- e. how the target population may prevent telephone contact, eg by providing a contact number for the researcher.

(4) The information sheet should also advise recipients who do not want to participate that they can tell the caller when the caller makes contact.

(5) An exception to sending written advice in advance of the telephone survey may be accepted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or other relevant delegated authority when a spontaneous response is required or when the questions are demonstrably not sensitive, or are not soliciting private information.

### The Telephone Interview and Script

(6) An indicative telephone interview script must be submitted with the ethics application.

(7) The script introduction must clearly identify the caller, the University and the project; and must refer to any written advice previously sent to potential interviewees.

(8) In situations where advance written notice has not been provided, the script must also:

- a. identify the Human Research Ethics Officer research complaint phone number;
- b. indicate how the researcher can be contacted; and
- c. provide an offer of written information if required by the potential participant.

(9) The specific nature of the call should not be disclosed if a third party answers. For example, it is acceptable to say "I would like to speak to .... regarding a letter we sent to her about women's health", but not "I would like to speak to .... regarding a letter we sent to her about how often she has had Pap tests".

(10) The script must cater for people who have not received the written material sent to them, eg where mail has been lost or people have changed address but retained their telephone numbers. Note: unless exempted by the University's ethical approval (see clause 5 above), all potential participants must have: (i) received an information sheet and (ii) considered whether they are willing to participate, prior to an interview.

(11) Researchers are advised to ascertain if interviewees wish to continue after each, say, 5 to 10 minute period and to warn if questions about sensitive issues, e.g. domestic violence or sexual behaviour, are about to be asked.

(12) The conclusion should include a thank you statement on behalf of the researcher and University for each interviewee's time.

## **Training**

(13) Researchers using telephone interviews must provide the HREC or other relevant delegated authority with details of the training of interviewers - including student interviewers.

## Status and Details

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|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Status</b>                | Historic  |
| <b>Effective Date</b>        | 17th May 2007   |
| <b>Review Date</b>           | 31st December 2019  |
| <b>Approval Authority</b>    | Human Research Ethics Committee   |
| <b>Approval Date</b>         | 17th May 2007   |
| <b>Expiry Date</b>           | 17th May 2024   |
| <b>Responsible Executive</b> | Rohan Walker<br>Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)                                    |
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"University"** - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

**"Complaint"** - As defined in Australian/New Zealand Standard - Guidelines for complaint management in organisations.

**"Student"** - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

**"Third party"** - A person or group other than the University or any of the University's partner institutions.