



# Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) Issues and Frequently Asked Questions (v3.2)

When using HREA, ensure that you are using the most up-to-date version of your web browser. NHMRC staff have found that Google Chrome works consistently for the HREA, but have also successfully used Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari. If your issue is not resolved by updating your browser and/or switching to Google Chrome, the following information outlines how to resolve some common issues.

Issues and Questions
1. I have created an account, but I have not received an activation email.
2. I have an HREA account but I cannot log in to the HREA.
3. How do I change my password?
4. How do I change my username?
5. How do I save my application?
6. What is the .omni file and how do I open it? What are the other HREA files?
7. Can I share my application with other researchers?
8. I cannot see my application in the HREA system. Where has it gone and how do I find it?
9. The HREA appears to be stuck in a loading loop, not loading or uploading. What should I do?
10. An error message has appeared.
11. The Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) that I intend to apply to is not listed in HREA. What should I do?
12. How do I select multiple public health institutions in my application?
13. None of the research team members are appearing on the Declarations page. What should I do?
14. How do I attach other relevant documentation?
15. How do I preview my HREA or obtain a draft version for printing?
16. I have completed my HREA. What should I do now?
17. I cannot find my completed application.
18. How do I finalise and submit my application?
19. How do I download and save my completed HREA?
20. How do I edit and amend my HREA following feedback from an HREC?
21. My research project has prior ethics approval, but I need to complete an HREA. How do I communicate this in the HREA?
22. My question is not listed here, where can I get assistance?



## Issues and Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. I have created an account, but I have not received an activation email.

Wait at least five minutes for the email to arrive. After this time, check your junk/spam mailbox to see if the email has been redirected. If the email is not in the junk/spam mailbox, navigate to the sign-in page and select **Reset your Password** and allow 30-60 minutes for the email to arrive.

In some cases, your institution's firewall may delay or block emails from the HREA. If this is the case, please contact your institution's IT section. If these options do not work, contact [help@hrea.gov.au](mailto:help@hrea.gov.au) for assistance.

### 2. I have an HREA account but I cannot log in to the HREA.

Check that your username is correct. This is the email address that you used when creating your HREA account.

#### Note:

1. Your HREA username is not the same as your old NEAF account.
2. Your HREA username is not linked with other platforms (such as ERM, REGIS or Research GEMS).

Check that your password is correct. **Note that passwords are case sensitive.** If you cannot remember your password, you can reset your password by clicking on the **Reset your password** link on the homepage and following the prompts. Remember to check your **Junk** mail folder for your password reset email.

Welcome to the NHMRC HREA

User name

Password

Log in

Can't access your account?  
[Reset your password](#)

Don't have an account?  
[Register now](#)

Don't want an account?  
[Guest access](#)

### 3. How do I change my password?

You can reset your password from the HREA homepage by selecting **Reset your password** and entering your username to receive your reset password in an email. You can also reset your password when you are logged in by following these steps:

- Log in to your HREA account.
- Click on the **Profile** tab at the top right of the screen.
- Select **Account settings**.
- Select **Change password**.
- Enter the current password and the new password and select **save**.
- The change to your password will be confirmed on screen.



#### 4. How do I change my username?

Your username must be a valid email address. You can change your username by logging in to your HREA account and following these steps:

- Click on the **Profile** tab at the top right of the screen
- Select **Account settings**.
- Select **Change username**
- Enter your password and the new username and select **save**. Note that the username must be an active email address.

#### 5. How do I save my application?

The HREA automatically saves your application as you answer questions and move between pages. You can also manually save your application by clicking the **Save** button at any time, which is located at the top right of the page.

#### 6. What is the .omni file and how do I open it? What are the other HREA files?

The **.omni** file can only be opened in the HREA system. When an HREA is completed, you will be asked to download two files: a **.zip** file (which contains your application in **.pdf**, **.rtf** and **.xml** formats and any application attachments you have uploaded) and an **.omni** file. The **.omni** file is a unique file type to the HREA which you cannot open on your computer. You can only open it by saving it on your computer, then uploading it into the HREA system.

The **.omni** file is a data file that contains your HREA and any attachments you uploaded with your application. The file can be uploaded into the HREA system if you need to make amendments to your application or if you want to use the application as a template to create a copy of the application in the future.

To upload the **.omni** file into the HREA, click the **Upload Application** button on the **Applications** page and select the **.omni** file on your computer.

HREA will store your completed application in the system for **90 days**. After **90 days**, your completed application will be removed from the system and you will need to upload your **.omni** file into the HREA if you need to edit the application.

**You should always save a copy of the .omni file on your computer as a backup, in case you need to re-upload a completed or in-progress application.**

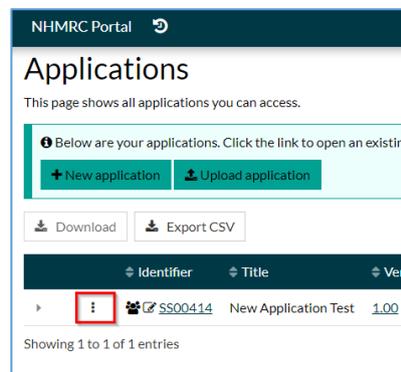
#### 7. Can I share my application with other researchers?

The HREA allows you to share your application with other people involved in your research project. To share your application:

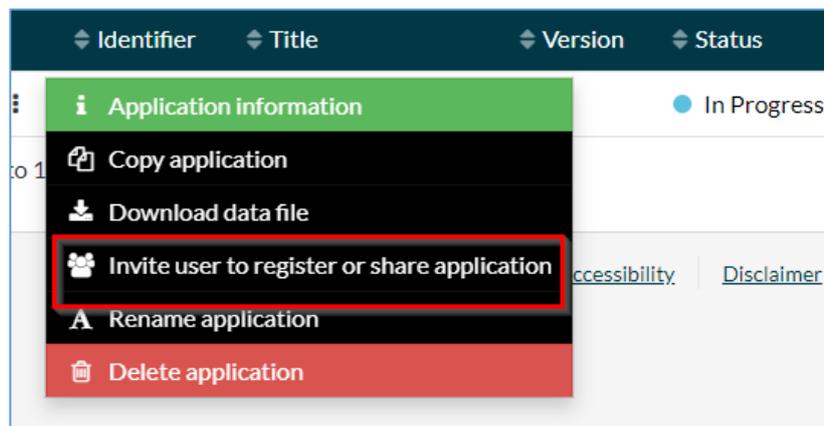
- Log in to the HREA and click on the **Applications** tab (located at the top right of the screen).
- Identify the application that you wish to share.



- Click on the **Options** button next to the application ID:



- Select the **Invite user to register or share application** option:



- Select **+Add another user** to add a new user.
- Enter the HREA username or email address of the person with whom you wish to share the application, select their level of access to **View** or **Edit**, then click **Save and send**. You can add as many invitations as necessary.

Refer to section 2.2.2 of the [HREA How-to Guide](#) for more information.

Only one person can have the application open at any time, and once the application is completed, those whom it was shared with will no longer have access to the application.

## 8. I cannot see my application in the HREA system. Where has it gone and how do I find it?

When you first log in to HREA, you are shown a summary contents page (the **Portal** page), with recent 'in-progress' applications displayed. All of your applications are viewable from the **Applications** page, which can be accessed by clicking on the **Applications** tab at the top right of the screen.

If you have clicked **New application** and provided a title but the application does not appear, refresh your page. Ensure that you are using the latest version of your web browser.

'In-progress' applications are removed from HREA after **365 days of inactivity** from the date the application was created. To ensure an application stays active, you must open it, make any change and save your application.



Completed applications are retained in the HREA system for **90 days** from the submission date. After **90 days**, they are removed from HREA. Steps to save your applications to your computer for long-term storage and access after submission are outlined in **FAQ 6. What is the .omni file and how do I open it?** and also in section 2.3.6 of the [HREA How-to Guide](#).

If your completed application does not appear in the table, it is likely that either the **90-day** retention period for completed applications has expired, or the application was shared with you and your access to the application has ceased.

## 9. The HREA appears to be stuck in a loading loop, not loading or uploading. What should I do?

As with any website, a number of factors can affect the performance of the HREA, including your computer settings, IT network, internet connection and web browser. Larger HREA applications (i.e. those with ten members of the research team, many attachments or large attachments) may also take longer to load.

If you are having difficulty loading a HREA page, then follow these steps:

- If a HREA page has been loading for longer than 5 minutes, note what page you were on, then log out and close your browser.
- Log back into the HREA and attempt to load the page. If the page still does not load, try logging in using a different internet browser.
- Make sure you are using the latest version of your browser. We recommend using Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari to access the HREA.
- If you are still experiencing difficulties, try accessing the HREA on a different computer and/or a different IT network (e.g. your home internet instead of your work). If the page loads, then there may be a setting on your computer or IT network which needs to be changed.
- You may need to seek advice from your IT department to resolve this.
- Contact [help@hrea.gov.au](mailto:help@hrea.gov.au) for assistance.

## 10. An error message has appeared.

Validation error messages appear at the top of screen if you have not completed a mandatory question on that page of your application. A red box is also shown around the question that you have not completed. Please be aware that some pages have more than one tab across the top of the page and you will need to answer the questions on each tab.

You can also keep track of your progress on your application by the topic menu on the left side of screen when you have your application open. Ticks in a green circle indicate sections that have been completed and crosses in a red circle indicate sections that still require answers.

An error message can also occur when the maximum file size limit has been reached and/or a certain file type has been uploaded at the **Upload** section of the HREA. Some files such as photo or image files are too large for uploading in the HREA. You may need to either remove that file or reformat it before uploading it into the HREA.

If you see an error message that says “Your application is locked for editing” when you are the only person accessing the application, log out, close your browser and log back in with a new browser window. If the issue persists, copy your application and create a new version.

## 11. The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) that I intend to apply to is not listed in HREA. What should I do?

HREA only lists HRECs that have notified NHMRC that they currently accept the HREA. If your



HREC is not listed in HREA then you should contact your HREC to determine what application they accept. If your HREC would like to adopt the HREA, they are encouraged to contact NHMRC and request their inclusion in the HREA system.

## 12. How do I select multiple public health institutions in my application?

Applications that require multi-site public health institutions under a mutual scheme may need to be created and submitted in another system. Please consult your institution's ethics/research office for more information.

You may be able to create and complete your application via NHMRC's HREA, however, upon completion you will need to upload the **.xml** file generated with your HREA into another system to complete the multi-site process. The **.xml** file is located in your **.zip** file upon completion.

## 13. None of the research team members are appearing on the Declarations page. What should I do?

You can list a maximum of ten research team members in your application and this limit is set to avoid excessive loading time when opening your application. The members listed here should be those who are directly accountable for your project. You may include any additional team members (if more than ten are required) in your project description.

The HREA allows for either:

- All listed members of the research team to sign the HREA  
or
- One team member to sign the application on behalf of the whole research team.

**You should check your institution's policy to determine which option is suitable for your application.**

If the **Declarations** page of your application does not show any members of the research team, then you will need to amend your answers to **Q1.9.11** for some or all of the members of your research team.

Return to the **Project Team** section of your HREA and click on each member of the research team from the left hand navigation menu. If all members of the research team must sign the HREA, ensure that **Q1.9.11** is answered **No** for each member. If one member can sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team, select **Yes** at **Q1.9.11** for that member and select **No** at **Q1.9.11** for all other members of the research team.

## 14. How do I attach other relevant documentation?

- Navigate to the **Upload** page (Q4.1 and Q4.2).
- Click **Yes** at **Q4.2** to show the **Upload attachment** and **Description of attachment** fields.
- To add an attachment, drop files to attach or select the **browse** button in the **Upload attachment** box.
- Select file for attachment and select **Open**.
- Ensure correct filename is listed and select **Start upload**.
- Confirm the correct document has been uploaded.
- To add more attachments, click the **+ Add Another** button.
- Add the attachment description and save.



## 15. How do I preview my HREA or obtain a draft version for printing?

You can obtain a **.pdf** copy of your HREA at any time while preparing the application. This document will contain answers to all the questions that you have answered in the HREA system.

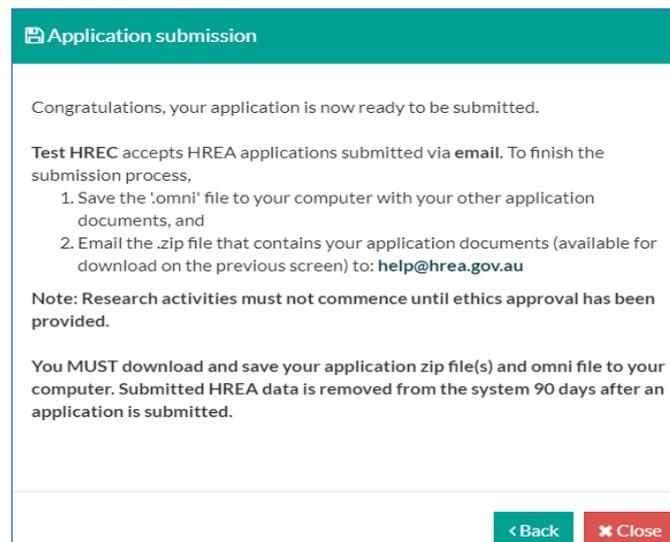
To obtain the **.pdf** copy:

- Open your HREA application that you wish to preview and/or print.
- Click on the **Preview** button, located at the top right of the screen.
- Your application will be downloaded as **.zip** file. Save this file to your computer.
- Open the **.zip** file. Your application can be found inside as a **.pdf** file.

**Note:** If you wish to draft your HREA on paper prior to completing it, you will need to go through all questions that apply to your project and activate (enter a character) those questions; this will ensure the relevant questions are on your (printable) **.pdf** version. Your application will be watermarked as a draft. Once you complete your application, you will obtain a copy without the watermark.

## 16. I have completed my HREA. What should I do now?

You will now need to submit your application directly to your HREC, according to their preferred processes for submitting applications. This is confirmed on the last window after you complete your application (**see screenshot below**). This is also outlined in the confirmation email you received.



If your institution's ethics/research office receives applications electronically through the HREA system and you have not heard from them in 48 hours after submission, contact your institution's ethics/research office. However, in most cases the HREA does not send your application to your HREC. You will most likely need to submit the **.zip** file to the HREC according to their preferred processes; you can refer to their contact details provided in the HREA HREC Directory.

If you did not download and save your **.zip** and **.omni** files when prompted, you will need to download these files again. Refer to **FAQ 15. How to download and save your completed HREA.**

If you need to make changes to your HREA application, you will not be able to go back into your completed application. However, you can create a new version of it and make edits as required. Refer to **FAQ 10. How do I edit and amend my HREA following feedback from an HREC?**



\*Note: this screenshot shows information for a test HREC. Your application will show the name and email address for the HREC that you have selected in your application.

## 17. I cannot find my completed application.

- Ensure you are on the **Applications** page of the HREA portal.
- If someone shared an application with you, it will no longer be visible in your list of applications once they, you or another user with edit privileges completes and generates the form.
- Completed applications are removed from HREA after **90 days**. Follow the instructions to upload the **.omni** file you generated when submitting the application to re-upload the application or to create a new version of the application.
- 'In-progress' applications are removed from HREA after **365 days of inactivity** from the date the application was created.

## 18. How do I finalise and submit my application?

To finalise your application:

- Once you have completed your application, navigate to **Q4.3-Q4.6** (the HREC page).
- Use the pull down list at **Q4.3** to select the Organisation that hosts the HREC (or other ethics review body) to which you wish to submit your application.
- Contact information for the selected HREC or ethics review body will be displayed.
- At **Q4.5**, select the review pathway you intend your application to be considered under.
- Navigate to the **Generate HREA document** page.
- Once the form is complete, select the **Generate HREA document** button.

Please note: application submission to the HREC to which you are applying is not automatic through the HREA website. The method by which your application is submitted is determined by the institution to which you are applying. You may need to contact the institution's ethics/research office for further information about that institution's submission process

To submit your application:

- Download and save your application **.zip** file and **.omni** file to your computer if you have not already done so (see **FAQ 8. How do I save my application?**). You require these files for application submission.
- Consult and follow your institution's policies to submit your HREA.
- Please contact your institution's ethics/research office if you have any questions about how to submit your application after downloading your files.

## 19. How do I download and save my completed HREA?

Once you have completed your HREA and have clicked **Generate your HREA Document**, a pop-up window will appear with options to save your application. If you do not save your HREA at this time, you can return to the **Applications** tab to download and save your completed HREA to your computer by following these steps:

- Click on the **Applications** tab at the top right of the screen.
- Find the application you just completed. Its status will have changed from **In Progress** to **Completed**.
- Click on the **Options** button next to your application.
- Click on the **Download application attachments** button.
- This will open a new window with options to download your application files.

Your application files include a **.zip** file (which contains your application in **.pdf**, **.rtf** and **.xml**



formats and any application attachments you have uploaded) and an **.omni** file. The **.omni** file is a unique file type to the HREA which you cannot open on your computer. You can only open it in the HREA system, by saving it on your computer and then uploading it into the HREA system.

Completed applications are removed after **90 days**. Follow the instructions to upload the **.omni** file you generated when submitting the application. 'In-progress' applications are removed after **365 days of inactivity** from the date the application was created.

## 20. How do I edit and amend my HREA following feedback from an HREC?

Completed applications cannot be opened or edited in the HREA system. You can instead create a new version of your application to edit and resubmit to the HREC. Follow the instructions in section 2.3.2 of the [HREA How-to Guide](#) to make edits and amendments to your application.

When you create a new version of your application, you will be able to view a 'tracked changes' version of your application that highlights the differences between the original application and the new version. You can access and download the tracked changes version by clicking on the **'track changes' button** located at the top right of the page.

Once you have finished editing your application you can submit it the same way as you did previously, this time (in addition to your **.zip** and **.omni** files) you will have a third file to download (a 'tracked changes' file).

## 21. My research project has prior ethics approval, but I need to complete an HREA. How do I communicate this in the HREA?

Answer **Yes** at **Q1.13** (*Has this research project had prior ethics approval?*) and complete all associated sub-questions. You will also have the opportunity to upload evidence of the prior ethics review at **Q1.13.2.1.1**.

## 22. My question is not listed here, where can I get assistance?

For questions about what information to provide in your application, contact the institution's ethics/research office to which you will be applying.

For technical assistance, please consult the [HREA Resources](#) page on NHMRC's website, which includes the [HREA How-to Guide](#).

For further assistance, please contact HREA Help:

- [help@hrea.gov.au](mailto:help@hrea.gov.au)
- **1800 500 983** (within Australia)
- **+61 2 6217 9451** (international callers)

HREA Help operates on **Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm AEST/AEDT**, excluding public holidays and ACT public holidays.