



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) Frequently Asked Questions

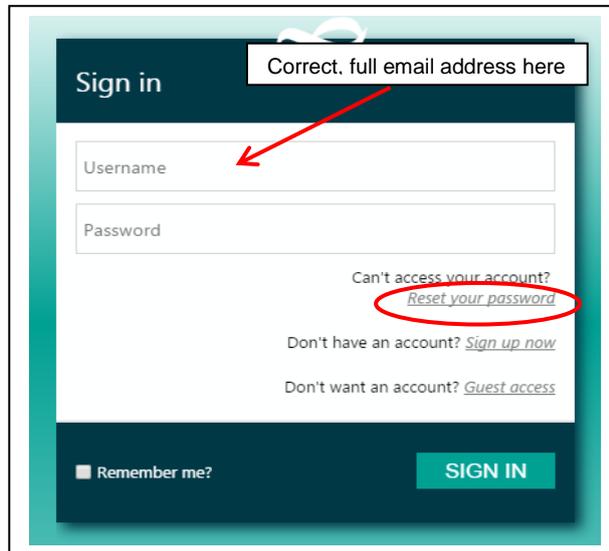
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|---|--|
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Last updated: 07/03/2018

1. I have an HREA account but I can't log into the HREA. How do I login? ([First page↑](#))

Check that your username is correct. This is the email address that you used to when creating your HREA account. Your HREA username is not the same as your NEAF account nor is it the same as the username you might use for the Online Forms platform.

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.



2. Can I automatically import pre-existing NEAF applications into the HREA? ([First page↑](#))

No. You are not able to import completed or partially completed NEAFs into the HREA as the HREA is a completely new system and asks different questions to the NEAF. Contact your ethics office if you require a copy of your NEAF or if you wish to amend a preapproved NEAF.

Where fields in the two systems are similar, you can manually copy and paste information into the HREA.

3. The HREA appears to be stuck in a loading loop, not loading, or nor uploading. What should I do? ([First page↑](#))

As with any website, the performance of the HREA can be affected by a number of factors including; a user's computer settings, IT network, internet connection and browser. Larger HREA applications (i.e. those with ten or more members of the research team and/or many attachments) and large attachments may also take longer to load. If you are having difficulty loading a HREA page then follow the below steps:

- I. 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.
- II. 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 Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari to access the HREA.
- III. If you are still experiencing difficulties, try accessing the HREA on a different computer and/or an alternative 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.

IV. If the problem is still not resolved, contact HREA Help and outline the steps you have undertaken.

4. None of the research team members are appearing on the Declarations page. What should I do? (First page↑)

The HREA allows for either:

- I. All members of the research team to sign the HREA, or
- II. 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 (see diagram below) then you will need to amend your answers to **Q1.9.11** for some or all of the members of your research team.

The screenshot shows the 'Declaration' page in the HREA system. On the left is a navigation menu with items like 'Introduction', 'HREC Directory', 'Project Overview', 'Project Team', 'Project Team Details', 'Disclosure of Interests', 'Restrictions', 'Evaluations', 'Location', 'Methods', 'Participants', 'Method Specific', 'Participant Specific', 'Project Details', 'Risk', 'Benefit', 'Data and Privacy', 'Generate HREC', 'Upload', and 'HREC'. The 'Declaration' item is highlighted. The main content area has a heading 'Declaration' and a warning: 'You must identify at least one researcher/investigator on the Project Team Page to complete the declaration.' Below this is a bullet point: 'Ensure you answer Q1.9.11 for each team member before completing this section.' A red arrow points from a text box 'You may also see this notice/warning. Go to Q1.9.11 to amend.' to an orange warning box: 'You can only have one team member with authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team. Please review and revise your answers to Q1.9.11 for each member of the project team.'

This section shows the 'Project Team Details' list. The items are: '(1) Dr XX 1', '(2) Dr XX 2', '(3) Mr YY 3', and '(4) Mr WW 4'. Each item is circled in red. A red arrow points from the 'Project Team' menu item in the navigation menu to this section. Below the list is the heading 'Disclosure of Interest:'.

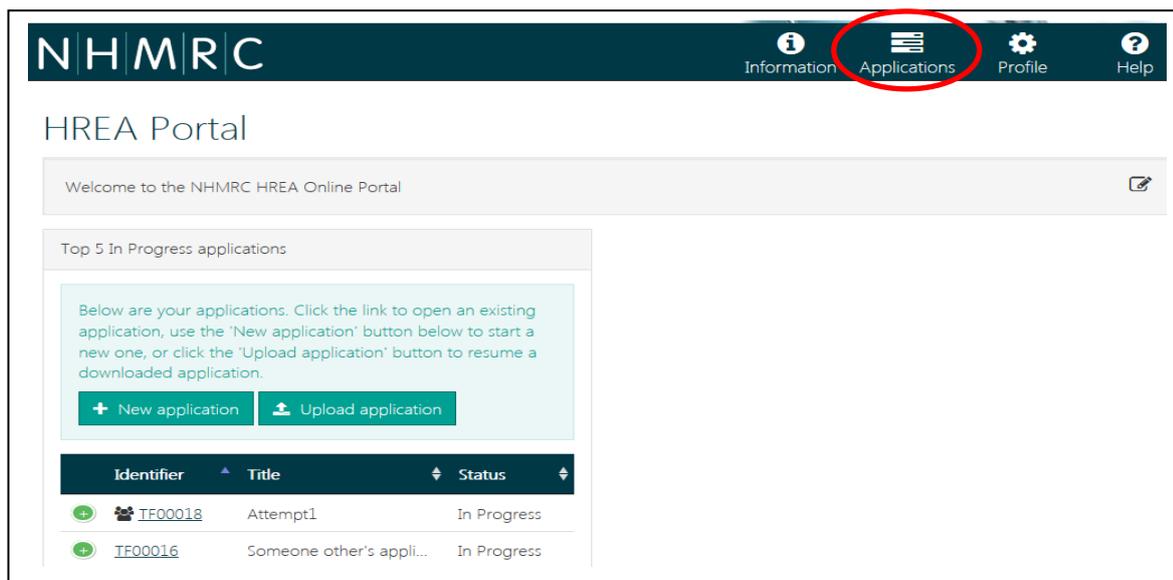
The screenshot shows the question 'Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?'. Below the question are three bullet points: 'In some instances, a single researcher/investigator is authorised to sign the ethics application on behalf of all members of the research team. Where this is the case, select 'yes' for only that researcher/investigator and 'no' for all other members of the research team.', 'If all members of the research team are required to sign the application, select 'no' for each investigator/researcher. All members of the research team will then need to sign the application on the Declarations Page.', and 'Consult with your institution's ethics or research office for further advice on whether this delegation is applicable.' At the bottom are two radio button options: 'Yes' and 'No'. The 'No' option is selected and circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it.

5. **The Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) that I intend to apply to is not listed in HREA. What should I do?** ([First page↑](#))

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, then they are encouraged to contact NHMRC and request their inclusion in the HREA system.

6. **I cannot see my application in the HREA system. Where has it gone and how do I find it?** ([First page↑](#))

When you first log into HREA, you are shown a summary contents page, with recent 'in-progress' applications displayed. All your applications are viewable from the **Applications** tab which can be accessed by clicking on the **Applications** tab.



'In-progress' applications are retained in the HREA system for **365 days** from the date the application was created. Submitted applications are retained in the HREA system for **90 days** from the submission date. Steps to save your applications to your computer for long-term storage are outlined in *section 2.3.6, page 58* of the ['How to' Guide](#).

If your submitted application does not appear in the table it is likely that either; the 90 days retention period of submitted applications has expired, or the application was shared with you and your access to the application has ceased.

When a HREA is submitted, access to the application by other members of the research team is removed. Only the person who originally created the application will be able to see the application in the HREA system.

If you did not originally create an application but still require a copy:

- I. Contact the creator of the application and ask them to send you a copy of the application. This would have been downloaded in a **zip** file, and an **omni** file.
- II. If they have not saved the **zip** and **omni** file, or they can't locate the file/s, then they will need to download the file/s again. Refer to the [How to Download and Save your completed HREA](#) guide on the HREA Support page for instruction.

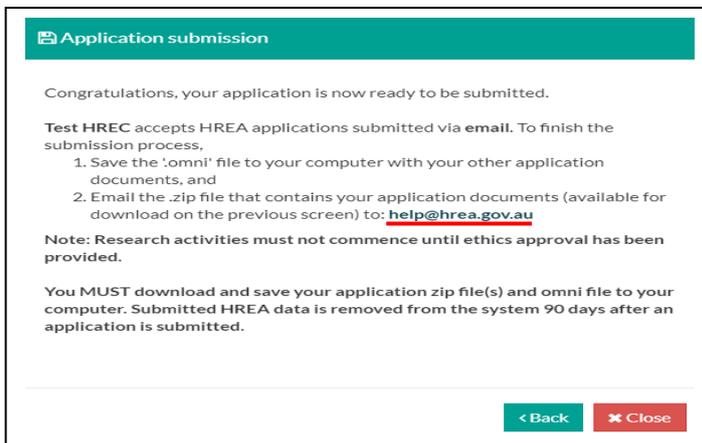
7. **I have submitted/completed my HREA. What should I do now?** ([First page↑](#))

You will now need to send your application directly to your HREC, according to their instructions for submitting applications. This is shown on the last window after you complete your application (see picture below). This is also

outlined in the confirmation email you received. If your ethics office receives applications electronically and you have not heard from them in 48 hours, ou contact them

In most cases, the HREA does not send your application to your HREC. You will still need to manually send the zip file to the HREC: refer to their contact details provided in the submission and email notifications. If you did not download and save your **zip** and **omni** files when prompted to you will need to download these files again. Refer to [How to Download and Save your completed HREA](#)

If you need to make changes to your HREA, you won't be able to go back into your current HREA; however, you can create a new version of it and make edits as required, refer to [2.3. Submitting and revising your ethics application](#) for more information.

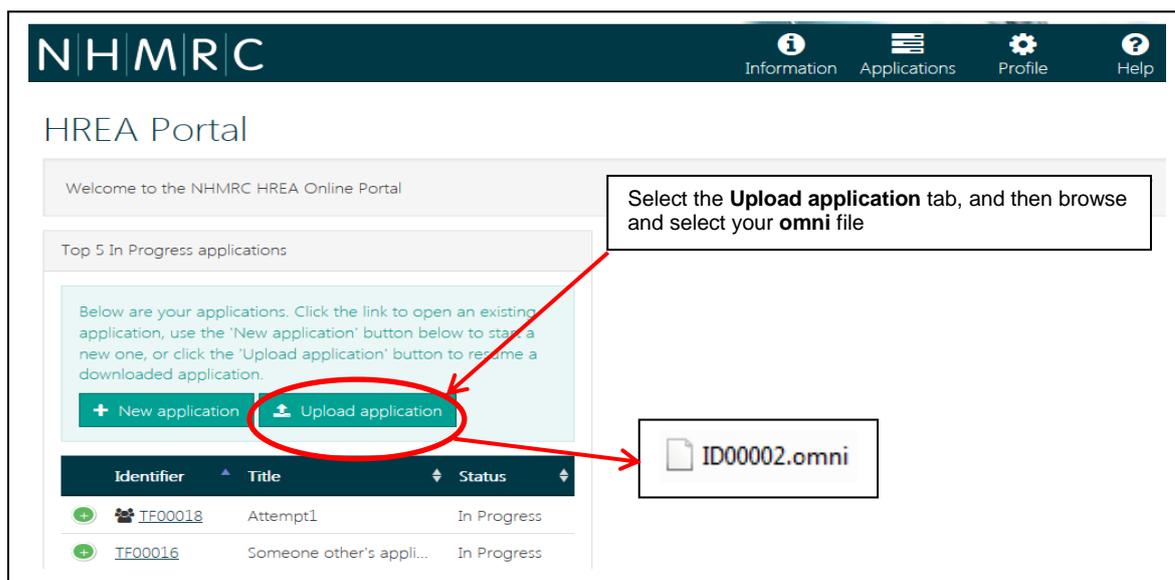


8. What is the omni file and how do I open it? ([First page](#))

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 all the application attachments) 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 loading it into the HREA system.

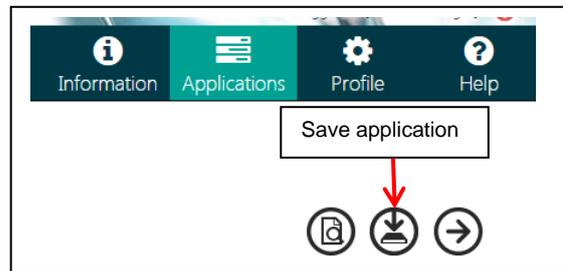
This file is a data file that contains your HREA and any attachments you uploaded with your application. The file can be uploaded into the HREA system if you need to make amendments to your application or if you want to use the application as a template to create a copy of the application in the future.

Follow the instructions in *section 2.3.2 page 49* of the [HREA 'How to' Guide](#) to upload your **omni** file into the HREA. HREA will store your completed/submitted 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 or amend the application. **You should keep a copy of the omni file on your computer as a backup.**



9. How do I save my application? [\(First page↑\)](#)

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



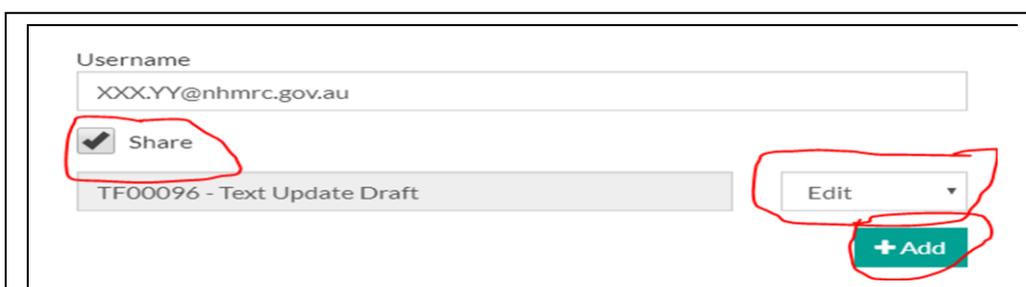
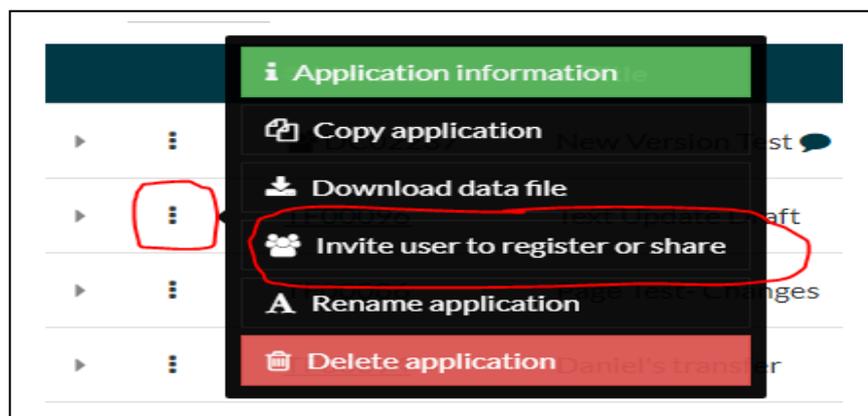
10. Can I share my application with other researchers? [\(First page↑\)](#)

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

- I. Log into the HREA and click on the **Applications** tab (located at the top right of the screen).
- II. Identify the application that you wish to share.
- III. Click on the **Options** button next the application ID.
- IV. Select **Invite user to register or share** option.
- V. Enter the email address of the person with whom you wish to share the application, tick **Share**, select their level of access **View** or **Edit** and click **Add**. You can add as many collaborators as necessary.
- VI. Click **Save**.

Refer to the [HREA How to Guide](#), section 2.2.2 *page 22*, for more information.

There are a few features to this function that you should be aware of. 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.

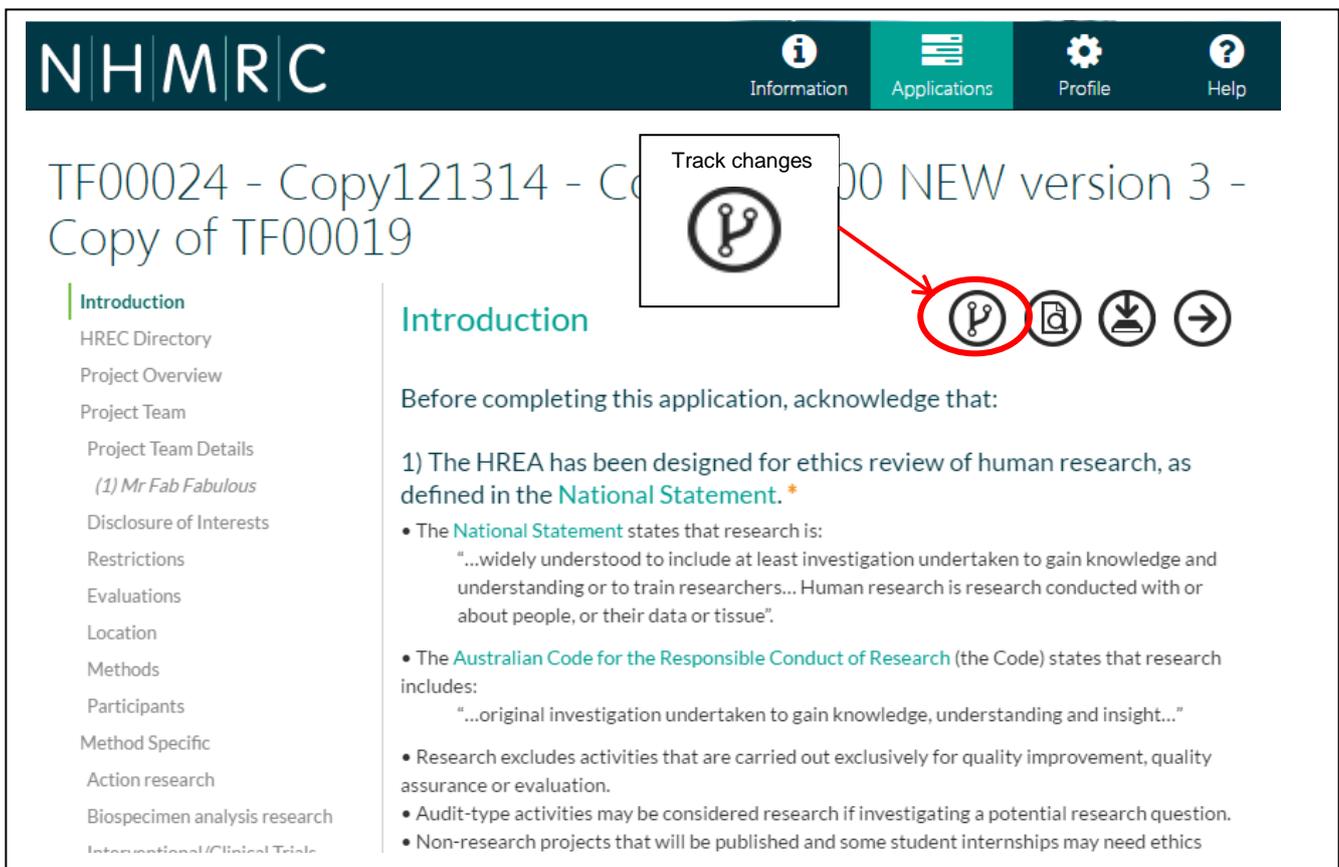
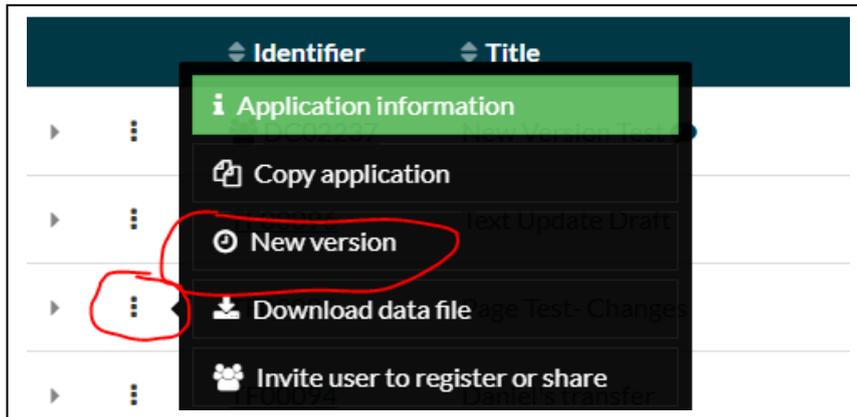
A screenshot of the HREA application sharing form. The form has a 'Username' field with the value 'XXX.YY@nhmrc.gov.au'. Below the field is a 'Share' checkbox, which is checked and highlighted with a red circle. Below the checkbox is a text field with the value 'TF00096 - Text Update Draft'. To the right of the text field is an 'Edit' dropdown menu, which is highlighted with a red circle. Below the dropdown menu is a green '+ Add' button, which is also highlighted with a red circle.

11. How do I edit and amend my HREA following feedback from an ethics committee? [\(First page↑\)](#)

Submitted 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 ethics committee. Follow the instructions in *section 2.3.2 pages 49 -52* of the HREA [User Guide](#) to makes edits and amendments to your application.

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

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 change** file.

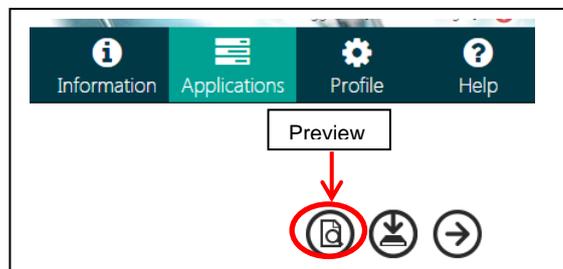
A screenshot of the HREA application page. The top navigation bar includes 'NHMRC', 'Information', 'Applications', 'Profile', and 'Help'. The main content area shows the application title 'TF00024 - Copy121314 - Copy of TF00019' and a 'NEW version 3 - Copy of TF00019'. A 'Track changes' icon (a circle with a fork) is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow pointing to a row of icons at the bottom right, where the 'Track changes' icon is also circled in red. The left sidebar contains a list of application details: Introduction, HREC Directory, Project Overview, Project Team, Project Team Details (1 Mr Fab Fabulous), Disclosure of Interests, Restrictions, Evaluations, Location, Methods, Participants, Method Specific, Action research, Biospecimen analysis research, and International/Clinical Trials. The main content area has an 'Introduction' section with the text: 'Before completing this application, acknowledge that: 1) The HREA has been designed for ethics review of human research, as defined in the National Statement.*' followed by bullet points about the National Statement and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

12. How do I preview my HREA, including how to obtain a draft version for printing? [\(First page↑\)](#)

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

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

Note: Your application will be watermarked as a draft. Once you complete your application, you will obtain a copy without the watermark.



13. My research project has prior ethics approval, but I need to complete an HREA. How do I communicate this in the HREA? [\(First page↑\)](#)

Answer 'Yes' at **Q1.13** – *Has this research 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**.

14. How do I select multiple public health institutions? [\(First page↑\)](#)

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 ethics 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.

15. I cannot open my HREA, or an error message appears, how do I open my HREA? [\(First page↑\)](#)

If your HREA has more than 10 project team members this reduces HREA's performance resulting in excessive loading time when opening your HREA. If you are able to open your HREA it is advised to list no more than 10 members who are directly accountable for your ethics application. You may include all other team members (if need be) in your project description. If you cannot open your HREA you may need to start a new one.

If you see a red error message, this occurs when the maximum file size limit and/or a certain file type has been uploaded at the Upload section of the HREA. Some files such as photo files are too large for uploading in the HREA. You will need to either remove that file or reformat it before uploading it into the HREA.

16. My question is not listed here, where can I get support? ([First page](#)↑)

For questions about what information to provide in your application, consult the ethics office to which you will be applying.

For technical assistance, please consult the [HREA Support page](#) which includes the '**Getting Started Guide**', '**How to** Guide', and '**How to Videos**'. For further assistance contact: help@hrea.gov.au or 1800 500 983 (within Australia) or +61 2 6217 9451 (international callers) Monday to Friday 09:00 a.m. to 05:00 p.m. AEST/AEDT, excluding public holidays and ACT public holidays.