

# Ethics Review: When to Include a Risk Assessment

## 1. Light Touch Ethics Review

A Light Touch Ethics Review is typically suitable for research projects where the potential risk or harm to participants is minimal. However, even in these cases, a risk assessment is crucial to ensure that all potential risks are identified and mitigated. Here are some scenarios when a risk assessment should be included:

- **Minimal Risk Projects:** Projects involving minimal risk to participants, such as surveys or interviews on non-sensitive topics, still require a risk assessment to confirm the study's low-risk nature. A risk assessment is embedded into the ethics application.
- **Established Protocols:** If the research follows well-established protocols (e.g., studies with typically developing children in mainstream schools), a risk assessment helps verify that the protocols are appropriate and adhered to.
- **Student Projects:** Many student projects may qualify for a Light Touch Review, but a risk assessment ensures that any potential risks are identified and managed appropriately.

**Please note that, for a light-touch review, the ethics application form and research proposal may be sufficient. If in doubt, attach an additional risk assessment.**

## 2. Full Review Ethics Review

A Full Review Ethics Review is necessary for research projects that present more than minimal risk to participants. In these cases, a comprehensive risk assessment is essential to evaluate and address potential ethical concerns. Here are some scenarios when a risk assessment should be included:

- **Vulnerable Groups:** Research involving vulnerable groups, such as children, individuals with cognitive impairments, or those in dependent relationships, requires a thorough risk assessment to protect these participants.
- **Sensitive Topics:** Studies exploring sensitive topics like sexual behaviour, political views, or ethnicity need a detailed risk assessment to ensure participants' privacy and well-being.
- **High-Risk Procedures:** Research involving high-risk procedures, such as clinical trials or studies involving invasive techniques, must include a risk assessment to evaluate potential physical and psychological risks.
- **Data Security:** Projects using sensitive data or requiring data linkage need a risk assessment to address potential privacy and confidentiality issues.

## Conclusion

Including a risk assessment in both Light Touch and Full Review Ethics Reviews is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of research participants. By identifying and mitigating potential risks, researchers can uphold ethical standards and conduct high-quality research.

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