

Program vs. Project studies Swinburne Research

Program vs. Project Research Studies

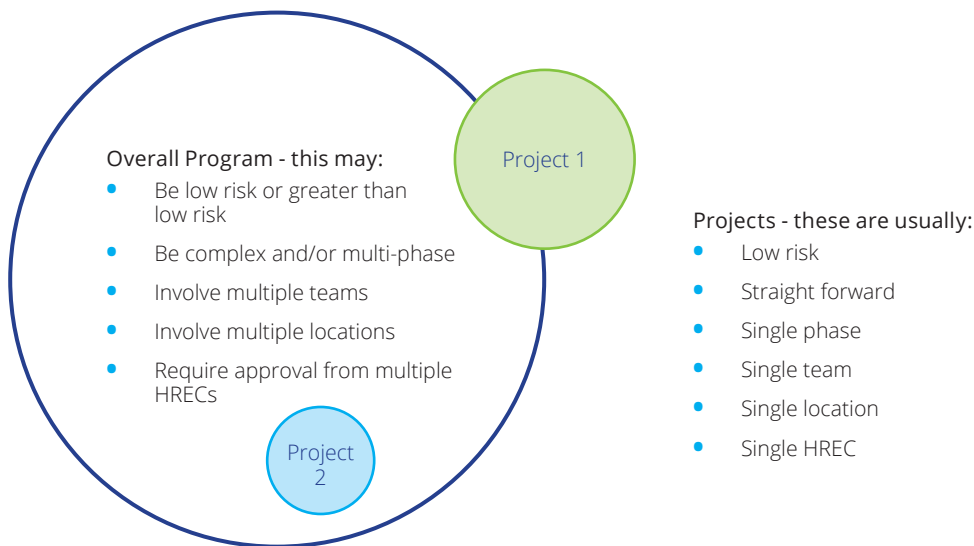
Research projects sometimes form a component of a larger program. Whilst it is important to convey information regarding the larger program upon seeking ethics clearance, it is also important to make clear the distinction between the project and the program. This guide may assist in helping applicants avoid confusing ethics committees regarding the two.

Programs vs. Projects

Programs are usually large, complex, multi-phase, and multi-team, and sometimes multi-location. They potentially, although not always, involve significant risk.

Projects, on the other hand, are straightforward and usually very simple. They generally only involve a single team and are almost always very low risk. They are often evaluations of programs or some of its components.

See below a Venn diagram illustrating the distinction between programs and projects:



Ethics applications

Applicants must bear in mind that they are seeking ethics clearance for the specific *project* component of the program and therefore focus on the *project*, and *not* the program.

In completing the application, a brief introduction to the overall program is necessary in order to establish the context of the project (see *N.S.* 3.1.1).

This information should be entered in the response to D2 in the online form in ERM. Provide a description of the background and the potential significance of the research project, if appropriate provide a bibliography.

Please consider using a diagram in order to demonstrate how the project fits into the program.

Once the context of the project within the broader program has been established, a more detailed introduction to the project is necessary (see *N.S.* 3.1.1), which should be provided as a response to D3 in the online form in ERM. Clearly state the aims and/or hypotheses of the research project.

When completing the rest of the application, respond to the questions only as they relate to the *project*, and *not* the program as well.

This means:

- Participants: only enter information regarding participants who will be involved in the project and only clarify their involvement in the project in the context of the entire program when absolutely necessary. Ensure, though, that information relating to participants involved in the program but not the project is not entered in the application in order to avoid confusing reviewers. (See questions A4 and E1 - E6 in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 3.1.12 - 3.1.21 & 5.2.25
- Data: only enter information regarding the data, and data management, as it relates to the project. (See questions E14 - E16 and sections F and G in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 2.2.1 - 2.2.2; 2.2.5; 2.2.6 (f) & (g) & (k); 2.3.10; 3.1.40 - 3.1.62
- Risks and Benefits: most importantly, only enter information regarding the risks and the benefits of the project, and *not* the program. The program overall could contain a high level of risk but the specific project less risk. Projects that form part of broader programs are often evaluations which means that only the additional risks caused by the project itself should be raised. These risks will most likely be related to privacy and confidentiality and publications. Only raise the benefits of the project and not the overall project - as per the risk, the benefits of the entire program may be substantial but the benefits of the project less so. (See questions E17 - E24; E26; F2 - F4; and G1 - G18 in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 1.6 - 1.9; 2.1.2 - 2.1.5; 3.1.1 (b) & (c)
- Consent instruments: Ensure that the information on the consent instruments only relate to the participants, activities, and data associated with the project and make it clear that participants can choose not to participate in the project yet still participate in the overall program. (See questions E13; E21; E23; E27; E6; E35; G9 - G10; G11 - G18; Section K in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 2.2.1 - 2.2.7; 2.2.9; 2.2.19; 3.1.23; 3.1.26

Other *program*-related information that may be relevant to the ethics application for the *project*:

- Funding: the project may be funded under the broader program funding (See questions C7 - C8 in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 5.2.8
- External Organisations: the application may necessitate the provision of information regarding any external organisations involved in the program (See question C6 in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 5.2.7
- Peer Review: The review of the project by the organisation that leads the program may constitute peer review (See question C3 in the online form in ERM) - see *N.S.* 1.2 & 3.1.1 (g)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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