# Human Research Ethics Approval Notification: Project Overview page -

# Definitions of research methods

Definitions taken from the [National Health and Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Application](https://hrea.gov.au/) and [Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry.](http://www.anzctr.org.au/)

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| Research Method | Definition  |
| Action research  | • The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement) Chapter 3.1 states that action research “is often community- or organisation-based and is carried out in the field. This approach involves testing ideas in practice as a means of improving social, economic or environmental conditions and increasing knowledge. Action research proceeds in a spiral of steps consisting of planning, action, and evaluation. It provides a basis for further planning of critically informed action".• This method includes design and implementation research and ‘rapid appraisal’ research. |
| Biospecimen analysis | • [National Statement 3.4](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/chapter-3-4-human-biospecimens-laboratory-based-research)describes biospecimens as, “any biological material obtained from a person including tissue, blood, urine, sputum and any derivative from these including cell lines. It does not include non-human biological material such as micro-organisms that live on or in a person.”* Biospecimen analysis includes potential genetic or genomic investigations.
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| Data linkage | • The character of and planned activities related to data will be addressed in Section 3 of the HREA for all projects, irrespective of the methods selected.• The International Population Data Linkage Network describes data linkage as, “Secondary use of linked administrative data… often referred to as ‘data linkage,’ ‘record linkage,’ or ‘linked data.’ This is typically population based longitudinal data that has originally been collected for another purpose. Linkage may take place across data sets in a single domain (i.e. health) or across domains (i.e. health, education, environment, early childhood, etc.)”. |
| Ethnographic | • Ethnographic research is a qualitative, iterative research method used to engage with a group, community, population or society that is aimed at description of everyday life and practice and the interpretation of cultural meanings, patterns and systems emphasising an ‘insider’s point of view’. Ethnographic research is usually based on fieldwork using a model of participant-observation and the research questions are often developed in collaboration with research participants. The result is an account of the people, place or institution with whom or with which the researchers have interacted. |
| Epidemiological | [• The World Health Organization describes epidemiology as “the study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events (including disease), and the application of this study to the control of diseases and other health problems. Various methods can be used to carry out epidemiological investigations: surveillance and descriptive studies can be used to study distribution; analytical studies are used to study determinants”.](http://www.who.int/topics/epidemiology/en/) |
| Interventional | • Interventional research is the use of one or more substances, devices, treatments, therapies, techniques or processes in a defined cohort of participants to determine the impact or effect on individuals. Interventions can be physical, behavioural, psychological or informational and can be used in clinical, educational or other settings. Interventional research may or may not: * Be comparative,
* Randomise the participants,
* Include an experimental arm, and/or
* Include a placebo arm.
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| Clinical Trials  | • [The World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/topics/clinical_trials/en/)defines a clinical trial as "any research study that prospectively assigns human participants or groups of humans to one or more health-related interventions to evaluate the effects on health outcomes". Medical interventions include any intervention used to modify a health outcome and include drugs, surgical procedures, devices, behavioural treatments, etc. |
| Observational | • [National Statement 3.1](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/chapter-3-1-qualitative-methods)states that observational research “involves the researcher observing participant(s) in their own environment, or in the environment being studied. Data collection through observation can be structured or unstructured, with the observer as a collaborative participant (participant observation) or external to the environment.” |
| Survey / Interview / Focus Group | • [National Statement 3.1](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/chapter-3-1-qualitative-methods)states that interviews “involve researchers talking to one or more participants, where the categories of response are focused but not necessarily pre-determined. Interviews are usually recorded by audio- or video-tape, or notes. These records are research data in themselves, but also may be transcribed. Interviews are usually conducted in locations mutually acceptable to participants and interviewers.” • National Statement 3.1 states that “focus groups of participants discuss a set of research questions or topics. This may entail the researcher acting as a moderator for the discussion”. • This method includes research using oral history.  |
| Textual analysis | • This method may involve evaluation of texts including film, television, photographs, magazines, advertisements, clothes, graffiti and other media. • This method may include the study of content or specific language and its frequency (e.g. hermeneutics or linguistic analysis).  |