

Creative Practice Research

What is Creative Practice research?

Creative Practice research is a broad term that refers to research based in and/or led by practice where a specific question is explored through the creative process. According to the RMIT [Research Policy](#), research is defined as an 'original investigation undertaken to gain knowledge, understanding or insight'. The new knowledge gained may centre around reflections on theory, the nature or means of practice, and the outcomes of practice. The outcomes are highly varied and may include designs, digital media, performances, curated exhibitions, text, sound and artworks, amongst others.

Creative Practice research may be exploratory in nature or may be research into existing practice. It can present new methods and understandings within the field of practice and lead to research outcomes that may be deemed to be 'non-traditional'. Despite this, the principles of respect, merit and integrity, justice and beneficence outlined in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (National Statement) also apply to any Creative Practice research that involves human participants or their data. This research is reviewed by the relevant CHEAN if it is negligible/low risk or by HREC if it is more than low risk.

What are some key considerations with Creative Practice research?

a) Research Method

A Creative Practice research project, as with any other research project, may have one or multiple research methods including Creative Practice, interviews, surveys, and observations. In terms of ethics, each research method is separate and contributes to the overall data collection for the project. The [Research Ethics Platform](#) (REP) has descriptions of each research method and the appropriate method/s should be selected for the research component of the Creative Practice research.

b) Participants/Contributors/Models

Creative Practice research can involve contributors, models, and participants. The difference between these three depends on the data being collected in relation to the research. *Participants* are people whose opinions, lifestyles, views etc. are relevant to and the focus of the research. These views are collected as data and analysed to assist in answering the research question. As such, participants generally need to complete a Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) prior to participating in the research.

Contributors and *models* are defined as people whose opinions, lifestyles, personal background, history or any other personal trait or opinion are not relevant to the research. Their contribution may support the research or contribute to it in a professional manner, but it is not the focus of the research. This contribution should be agreed upon via a memorandum of understanding or contract. Contributors and models can also be participants, but their respective roles need to be clearly distinguished and outlined.

For Creative Practice research, considerations include:

- Determine whether people involved in the project are contributors, models or participants.
- What level of consent and/or agreement is required for each group.
- What data is being collected and how it will be managed.

c) Data collection and management

'Data' refers to any information that is collected from participants to be analysed and that contributes to answering the research question. This may include survey results, interview responses, creative outputs, and notes. The [RMIT Research Data Management Procedure](#) outlines the responsibilities of researchers with respect to research data management in accordance with [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#).

Researchers have a responsibility to retain clear, accurate and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials to a sufficient standard that allows for verification and/or reproduction of research by others. For Creative Practice research, considerations include:

- How will data be collected from participants and how will it be stored, particularly with creative outputs?

- How will informed consent be recorded and retained for the retention period?
- What data will be collected to ensure that clear, accurate and complete records are retained that will enable research to be verified or replicated?
- How will data be shared amongst the research team, particularly with audio, visual, or media outputs?

d) Voluntary and informed consent

Voluntary and informed consent flows from the principle of respect for human beings includes respect for their capacity to make their own decisions, such as **not to participate**.

Participants must be appropriately informed of the research before consenting to participate.

In Creative Practice, consent can be difficult to obtain or impractical, particularly if participants are part of an audience, so consideration needs to be given to how consent will be obtained, if it will be obtained or if a waiver of consent is warranted. Chapter 2.3 of the National Statement provides details about when a waiver of consent can be considered. Some considerations include:

- Whether signing and returning a consent form is the most appropriate method of obtaining consent.
- Protocol for how the researcher will determine capacity to give consent and verify participant inclusion criteria.
- How participants will be informed of the research and consent will be recorded.
- How participants can withdraw their consent.

e) Level of risk

Researchers are responsible for assessing the risk level of their proposed research activity and determining if anticipated benefits of the research outweigh the risks associated with it.

For Creative Practice research, additional considerations may include:

- The sensitivity of the research data being collected and the confidentiality of the participants.
- The potential participants and whether the targeted participants are a vulnerable group as outlined in the National Statement and how this will be determined in a Creative Practice environment.
- The potential for psychological risk and how this will be determined.
- The potential for physical risk depending on what participation in the research involves.
- Protocols for participants to withdraw their participation from the research. This is particularly important in a Creative Practice environment where the 'data' could include contributing to creative outputs.

Key things to remember when completing the application:

- While the project may be 'Creative Practice research', the research method is not necessarily Creative Practice but may be a combination of several research methods.
- Distinguish between contributors, models and participants within the project. Contributors and models can also be participants, but their roles need to be clearly defined.
- Identify how participants will be informed of the research and provide consent to participate as well as how they will be able to withdraw their participation.
- Determine what data is being collected, how it is being collected, and how it will be managed.

Additional Resources

Bolt, B. MacNeill, K, McPherson, M, Barrett, E, Sierra, M, Eddie Brown, P, Miller, S et al. 2016. "IDARE Creative arts research approaches to ethics: new ways to address situated practices in action." *QPR PROCEEDINGS OF THE 12TH BIENNIAL QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (QPR) CONFERENCE*, no. 12 Biennial QpR: 98-105.

Candy, Linda. 2020. *The Creative Reflective Practitioner : Research through Making and Practice*. London, Routledge.

Further information

Further information can be found in the [RMIT Research Policy: Human Research Ethics Procedure](#) and the [Research Data Management Procedure](#).

For further advice on this topic or other human research ethics matters, please email humanethics@rmit.edu.au. A Research Governance and Ethics Coordinator will assist you and may connect you to one of the CHEANor HREC members in your discipline who can offer expert ethics advice.