

Proposed notice to all HSRC researchers concerning 1) exemption from ethical review and 2) class approvals.

This notice intends to expedite the approval of certain types of research conducted within the HSRC, and hopes to minimise the burden to applicants and the REC of reviewing certain types of research conducted by HSRC staff.

1. The provisions of this document notwithstanding, it is mandatory that all research with human participants conducted by HSRC staff must be ethically approved before data collection commences.
2. **Exempt Research:** research which reviews and analyses data that is freely available in the public domain, e.g. newspaper reports, meta analysis of published articles etc. are exempt from ethical review. HSRC staff planning such research should notify the chair of the HSRC REC in writing that such research is being planned and that in the opinion of the lead researcher/applicant it meets the criteria for exemption. A brief outline of the proposed study must be included in the letter. The REC chair will issue a letter of exemption if appropriate. Conference commissions are also exempt except where it involved primary research. In such cases, researchers will have to apply for ethical clearance of presentations at conferences.
3. **Class Approvals:** Research which is an extension of an already approved study qualifies for a class approval provided that the instruments, interventions and intended outcomes of the proposed study are identical to those of a study already approved by the HSRC REC. The most obvious type of class approval would be where an investigator wants to repeat or extend an already approved study to a new geographic region, provided that the participants are also of similar demographic and vulnerability status as the study already approved. In such cases the lead researcher need only write a letter to the REC chair requesting a class approval and citing the HSRC REC approval number of the previous study. The applicant has an obligation to mention any intended deviations from the already approved protocol. The REC chair will issue a class approval if appropriate.