

APB Research Ethics Help Centre

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ABSTRACT

The requirement and expectation for ethics adherence in research grew in recent years, urging researchers to observe ethical research practices and standards. Despite its undeniable importance, many often face some common challenges- understanding the processes and procedures and having an accessible platform to refer to, upon attempting to adhere to research ethics, leaving them demotivated and confused. To tackle these often-reported issues, the research, therefore, aims to develop a research ethics help centre as a point-of-reference, that is not only functional but also user-friendly. This is done through the use of the ADDIE model, including its five (5) stages of (i) analysis, (ii) design, (iii) development, (iv) implementation, and (v) evaluation. The development starts through analysing the needs of research ethics applicants, by collecting their feedback on the online messaging platform WhatsApp. Based on the input received, the objective is then identified before the web-based platform is designed. Using Google Sites as the preferred website builder, the help centre is developed and implemented for applicants to use. The development culminates in the evaluation of APB Research Ethics Help Centre through an online survey, which looks into a number of components related to the overall user experience upon surfing the website. To ensure a pleasant browsing experience, the development of APB Research Ethics Help Centre is also guided by the principles of Hick's Law. Overall, this help centre is believed to be a practical approach to making sure that the processes and procedures in research ethics are understood by many.

Keywords: Research ethics, ADDIE model, Hick's Law

INTRODUCTION

To form the foundation and credible scholarship, it is crucial to undergo ethical research practices. For the past several decades, the importance of research ethics has been increasingly emphasised by universities and research institutions all over the world (Busher & Fox, 2022; Butterwick et al., 2020). Looking at this scenario, ethics is not just an administrative requirement, but plays a vital role in conducting research, publishing findings, as well as securing funding. According to Anderson (2017), disciplines that involve human participants, for instance, language, communication, and education, require careful attention to issues such as privacy, informed consent, and data security. Hence, experienced researchers and novice scholars are obliged to understand, internalise, and accept the ethical frameworks.

Regardless of the growing awareness pertaining to this matter, current studies suggest that institutional efforts to promote research ethics should often remain procedural and compliance oriented. The primary focus should be on approval and documentation processes, instead of fostering a sustained culture of ethical reflection (Steinert et al., 2021; Pizzolato & Dierickx, 2021). This gap reveals that, while ethical policies have become more officialised, the translation into consistent daily research practices remains jagged. Many researchers, especially particularly novice researchers, are facing doubts when confronted with complicated ethical problems during data collection, analysis, or publication. To add, the lack of accessible institutional support further bounds the efficiency of ethical frameworks in improving legitimate ethical accountability and awareness.

This gap is very concerning due to the increasing incidence of integrity-related challenges in academia, for instance, plagiarism, data fabrication, and authorship disputes. These issues will threaten the integrity of

individual researchers and damage the global confidence in academic bodies. Consequently, there is a pressing requirement for methods to advance ethical dialogue, reflection, and professional growth.

After reviewing these challenges, the development of a Research Ethics Help Centre is projected as a hands-on institutional initiative designed to fulfil the identified gaps. The Help Centre provides researchers with continuous guidance and support in steering ethical complications across all steps of the research route. All in all, the initiative seeks to promote a more ethically conscious research philosophy that highlights the importance of credibility, transparency, as well as accountability in the academic society.

Problem Statement

On the other hand, although the availability of institutional guidelines and policies are at present, researchers always encounter obstacles in navigating the ethics approval process (Chow et al., 2025; M Petrova et al., 2019). Some of the struggles that they may face are in interpreting complex terminology, locating the correct forms, or identifying the appropriate contacts for clarification. Fragmented information sources and inconsistent instructions often leave researchers demotivated and confused (Chow et al., 2025; M Petrova et al., 2019). These challenges can have a number of consequences, such as delayed approvals, incomplete applications, or inadvertent breaches of protocol. Therefore, these challenges call for a streamlined, user-friendly point-of-reference that applicants can go to, especially for remote and diverse participant groups (E Skelton et al., 2020).

This project was done to curb these challenges by developing the APB Research Ethics Help Centre, a web-based platform. This platform offers consolidated, easy-to-navigate guidance on ethics processes. The aims of the platform are to demystify the ethics application process, reduce confusion, and promote adherence to ethical standards by leveraging the principles of instructional design and user experience.

Objectives

The APB Research Ethics Help Centre was designed with the following specific objective:

1. To develop a centralised online help centre that consolidates all essential information related to research ethics applications within the faculty.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

Product Description

The APB Research Ethics Help Centre is a web-based platform developed using Google Sites. It was chosen due to its ease of deployment, flexibility, as well as zero licensing cost. The function of the help centre is a one-stop reference point where researchers can access institutional guidelines and policies, step-by-step application procedures, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), downloadable forms and templates, and contact information for further assistance.

By adopting Hick's Law, which posits that decision time increases with the number of available choices, the platform's layout was designed intentionally to highlight only the most important elements at each stage. This approach will reduce cognitive load and improve the speed and accuracy with which users find information.

Methodology

The development process is based on the ADDIE model. This model is widely recognised in instructional design for its systematic approach. The five stages are as mentioned below:

- **Analysis:** To identify possible users of the ethics process, a requirements assessment was conducted at the start of the project. Participants expressed displeasure with the current channels, difficulty interpreting protocols, and a lack of centralized information.

- **Design:** The team created a site map and content flow based on this advice. The selection of visual hierarchy, font, and colour schemes was made with readability and easy navigation in mind.
- **Development:** The platform was created to host text, images, and hyperlinks using Google Sites. This in turn has made sure that important forms, templates and other downloadable materials are accessible for many.
- **Implementation:** After launching in a pilot programme, the support centre's contents were made accessible to intended users namely the postgraduate students and faculty members.
- **Evaluation:** Usability, accessibility, and perceived utility were evaluated using a structured online survey. Elements including layout, instruction clarity, and resource relevancy were rated by respondents.

POTENTIAL FINDINGS AND COMMERCIALISATION

Potential Findings

Preliminary evaluations of the APB Research Ethics Help Centre discover a number of promising outcomes, such as:

1. A significant reduction in time spent searching for information, improved comprehension of ethical requirements, and increased confidence in completing application forms.
2. A high engagement with downloadable templates and procedural flowcharts, suggesting that the platform effectively addresses previously identified pain points.
3. A sense of autonomy among researchers and reduce their dependencies on administrative staff, especially for basic inquiries.

Commercialisation Potential

Opportunities for commercialisation include:

- **Customisation Services:** Developing tailored versions aligned with specific institutional policies.
- **Training Packages:** Providing workshops or online modules to train ethics officers or researchers in using the platform.

NOVELTY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Novelty

The APB Research Ethics Help Centre is different as compared to existing resources due to its integration of instructional design, cognitive psychology, and user-centric design principles. Previously, traditional ethics guidelines were presented as static PDFs. It required researchers to navigate multiple portals. On the contrary, the help centre supplies a dynamic, consolidated, and intuitive interface built explicitly to assist the researchers.

The application of Hick's Law to an academic support tool is another feature that needs to be mentioned. The website permits its users to make faster, more accurate decisions about where to go and what to do next. The consideration of the design aspect has not been applied in the context of research ethics support at APB before. This underscores the project's innovative element.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback shared by a number of respondents through a preliminary evaluation of the help centre, several improvements were proposed:

1. Incorporating engaging video tutorials, flowcharts, and multimedia walkthroughs so to cater to different

learning styles

2. Delivering rapid solutions through the integration of the state-of-art technology like AI-powered chatbots, thus reducing the need for email or phone support
3. Assessing the usability and efficiency of the help centre through follow-up studies from the angles of user satisfaction and administrative efficiency
4. Expanding the use of similar platforms at other faculties or institutions to determine its suitability to a variety of research environments

These recommendations are hoped to be addressed as the APB Research Ethics Help Centre continues to be improved and refined as the faculty assistance tool facilitating research ethics processes and procedures.

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