

Site Specific Assessment – Advice to Applicants

A research project cannot commence within the SA public health system without being authorised by the Chief Executive / delegate of the site where the project is to be undertaken. To obtain authorisation, a Site Specific Assessment (SSA) form must be completed and submitted to each site participating in the project, through the responsible Research Governance Officer.

The steps below are a guide to making a SSA application within the SA public health system:

Overview

Commencing 2 April 2012, SA Health is introducing a research governance process that involves the submission of a separate form designed to assess key research governance elements of a research proposal. Known as a Site Specific Assessment (SSA), the form considers a range of research governance issues, including whether relevant approvals have been granted to conduct the project at the local site; whether there are sufficient resources including financial and human resources to undertake and complete the project successfully; and whether other insurance, risk management and contractual requirements are satisfied.

There are two key components involved in the processing of a SSA by a SA Health site / institution:

- a. Review of the SSA by the delegated Research Governance Officer (RGO), who will provide a recommendation to support / not support the project; and
- b. Endorsement of the recommendation by the Chief Executive or delegate of the site / institution, a process referred to as project authorisation.

A project cannot commence until authorisation has been supplied, even if ethics approval has been granted.

How does this apply to my Research?

The completion of a site specific assessment is a requirement for all research taking place within the SA public health system. This is inclusive of single site and multi-site research.

Creating a Site Specific Assessment form

The process for creating a SSA form involves the use of the [Online Forms](#) website. Once the applicant has created a user account, it is necessary to first set up a NEAF application. It should be noted that if the applicant is not intending to submit a NEAF generated using Online Forms, it is not necessary to complete the NEAF in full. However, the design of the online forms system means that the NEAF needs to be created initially before the SSA module can be accessed.



The simple process for doing this using Online Forms is:

1. Select the "Create New Application" Option
2. Select "SA" as the jurisdiction
3. Select "NEAF" as the Ethics Form Type
4. Select "NEAF" under "My Project" in the menu bar at the left of the screen
5. Click on the "SSA" tab
6. Select "Create a New SSA Form".

The screenshot shows the 'Australia Online Forms for Research' interface. The navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'MY PROJECTS', 'MY CONTACTS', 'HELP', and 'CONTACT US'. The 'SSA' tab is highlighted in red. Below the menu, there is a table of sections and question numbers. A red arrow points to the 'SSA' tab.

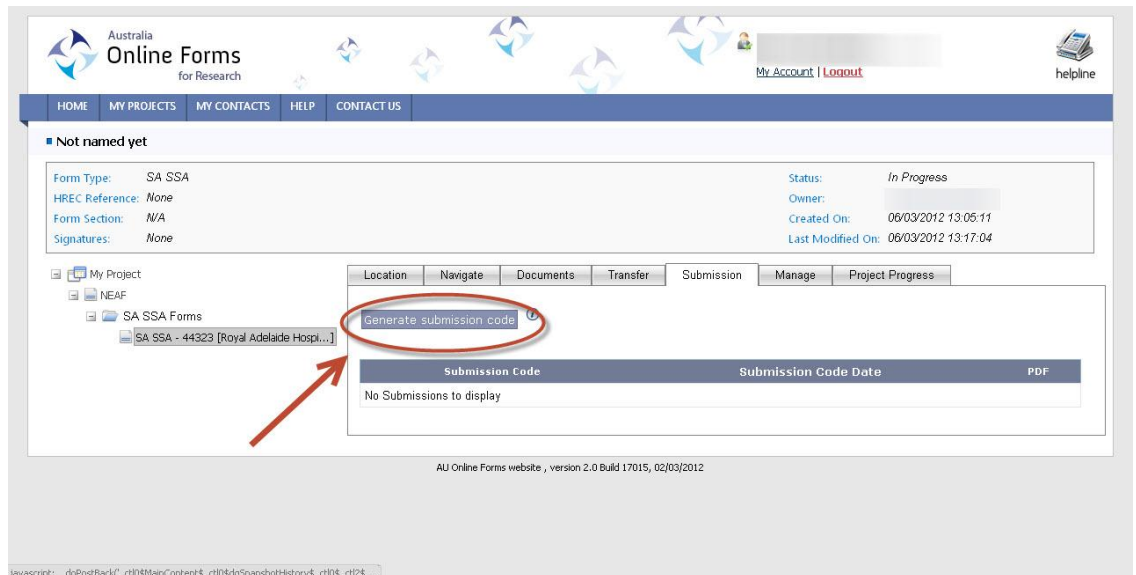
SECTION	QUESTION NUMBER
1. TITLE and SUMMARY of Project	1-2
2. RESEARCHERS / INVESTIGATORS	1 2 3 4 5-5c 6-7a
3. RESOURCES	1-4 5-9
4. PRIOR REVIEWS	1-3 4-5 6-7 8-9 10 11
5. PROJECT	1-4 5 6 7-9 10-12 13-15 16 17 18
6. PARTICIPANTS	1-4 5 6-7 8 9-11 12 13-18 19-22
7. PARTICIPANTS SPECIFIC	1-3 4-9 10-14 15-18 19-20 21-24
8. CONFIDENTIALITY / PRIVACY	1 1a 1b 1c 1d 1e 2-4 5-6 7-8 9-11 12 13-15 16-20 21-23

If the applicant has used Online Forms to complete the NEAF, the key project information will be populated into the relevant fields in the SSA to reduce the need for duplication.

Creating a Submission Code

Once all sections of the SSA have been completed, it is necessary for the applicant to create a submission code to provide with the application to the RGO. This is easily done in Online Forms:

1. Select the SSA under "My Project" / "NEAF" in the menu bar at the left of the screen (if not already selected).
2. Select the "Submission" tab at the top of the screen.
3. Click the "Generate Submission Code" button.



2. Submission of the completed SSA to the Research Governance Officer

When the SSA has been completed, the researcher must print a copy of the form, making note of the submission code. A copy of the SSA and all supporting documentation must then be submitted to the relevant RGO. It is advised that the applicant discusses their SSA submission with the RGO in advance to determine specific submission requirements.

In all cases, for submission purposes, the SSA must be accompanied by the unique submission code generated in Online Forms.

A list of all RGO's and their contact details is available at the [SA Health Research Ethics website](#).

3. Assessment of the SSA

The RGO has primary responsibility for assessing the SSA form. Once the assessment has taken place, the RGO will make a recommendation to endorse (support) the site specific assessment, providing all site requirements are satisfied. This recommendation, along with the SSA form, will then be provided to the CEO/delegate of the institution.

The CEO/delegate will then consider the recommendation and make a final decision as to whether to approve the project (project authorisation). This step must occur before the project can commence at the site, even if ethics approval has been received. This final decision on whether the project has been authorised to commence at the site will then be communicated to the applicant by the RGO.

Ethics Approval and Project Authorisation

Evidence of HREC approval must be provided to the RGO before the CEO/delegate can authorise the SSA. Please note that project authorisation is not instantaneous, and nor is it guaranteed. In the event the project is not authorised, feedback will be provided on the reasons why it has not been endorsed.

If the HREC associated with the site/institution where the research is being conducted is undertaking the ethical review of the project, the SSA and HREC ethical review may occur in parallel. However, the decision to authorise or not authorise the commencement of a research project can only be made once the HREC has approved the project.



4. Further Information

For further information regarding research governance within the South Australian public health sector, please refer to the SA Health Research Ethics [website](#). If you cannot find what you are looking for on this site, please contact your local Research Governance Officer for specific enquiries. For general enquiries regarding research governance within the South Australian public health system, please contact researchgovernance@health.as.gov.au.