Ethics Management Plan

1. Purpose

This plan establishes the framework for ethical conduct to ensure compliance with ARC requirements across all Centre activities. Its purpose is to ensure that the Centre upholds the highest ethical conduct and research integrity, in compliance with all relevant institutional, national, and international standards. This plan fulfils the requirements of the ARC Grant Agreement (Clause 7) and associated reporting and compliance obligations.

2. Scope

The plan applies to all Projects, Participating Organisations, Personnel, and research locations including industry and international sites.

3. Governance and Responsibilities

Director: Oversight of all Centre activities and ultimate accountability for ethics compliance and ARC reporting
Business Manager: Maintenance of the ethics register, coordination of reporting, and monitoring compliance
Node Leaders: Responsible for local compliance, in accordance with institutional policies
Project Leads: Ensure ethics approvals are obtained before commencing any work; Identify whether Projects trigger additional legislative requirements (e.g. gene technology, biosafety)

Relevant policies or references are the following:

ARC Research Integrity Policy
Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018
Monash Research Ethics and Integrity
Deakin University Research Integrity
The University of Melbourne Research Ethics and Integrity
RMIT University Research Integrity

4. Ethics Approval Framework

All research must comply with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018), ARC policies, and institutional ethics frameworks. No research may commence without documented ethics approval.

Where specific regulatory approvals are required (e.g. Gene Technology Act 2000, biosafety, OGTR, or other statutory approvals), these must be obtained prior to the commencement of the relevant research activity and documented in the Project Agreement.

Applications for ethics approval are managed by the institution leading the Project, with reciprocity or dual approvals where required, and noting that partners must comply with equivalent ethical standards.

Project Agreements will specify required ethics approvals required and enable tracking, including with regard to data sensitivity, safety, and IP considerations.

It is the responsibility of all Centre Members to ensure that they adhere to responsible research practices, including maintaining accurate data, proper authorship, no misconduct, and carrying out mandatory ethics training prior to any work being carried out, as well as any required periodic refresher training.

The Centre manager will create and maintain a register to capture all ethics approvals across the Centre, containing the following information:

- Project ID
- Approval type
- Approval status
- Expiry dates
- Responsible investigator

5. Activities Requiring Ethics Approval

Based on the Centre's research program, ethical and/or regulatory approvals may be required in the areas of:

- Environmental research
- Gene technology and genetic modification (including OGTR approvals where applicable)
- Biosafety and related technologies
- Industry-based research environments
- Human research activities such as surveys or stakeholder engagement (where applicable)

6. Data, Privacy, and Risk Management

Data is managed per Data Management Plan, which dictates secure storage and controlled access.

Ethics and data risks are both integrated into the overall risk framework and listed in the SAGE-M risk register.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

This Ethics Plan will be subject to annual audits and will be an agenda item in Executive Committee meetings when relevant. Any breaches will be escalated to the Director, Executive Committee, and the ARC if required, in accordance with the relevant institutional research integrity procedures. The Ethics Register will be reviewed regularly to ensure that all work is being carried out in accordance with the relevant guidelines and approvals.

8. Continuous Improvement

Annual review and updates based on ARC requirements and feedback. This is a living document and will be reviewed annually.