

Research Participant Reimbursement and Cash Handling Guideline



1. Introduction and Context

This procedure supports the implementation of the [University of Newcastle Work Health and Safety Policy](#) and must be read in conjunction with that document. Refer: [Policy Library](#) document # [000972](#)

2. Definitions

Research participant reimbursement refers to the practice of providing participants in Research activities with an amount of money or an item of monetary value (such as a shopping voucher or gift card) as a way of reimbursing them for participation in the activity and/or as an incentive to encourage participation in the Research, or in order for them to purchase materials required for their participation (such as nicotine replacement therapy) if these materials are not supplied.

Cash handling refers to the collection, handling, and transfer of University funds between University staff members and other members of the community (such as participants in Research activities) within the reimbursement process.

3. Scope

This procedure outlines the requirements and practices for safely facilitating the reimbursement of Research participants for their time in participating in Research activities.

This procedure applies to all University staff and other workers, students and visitors irrespective of their work, study or placement location.

4. Procedure

It is recognised that carrying amounts of cash or items of monetary value (such as shopping vouchers or gift cards) creates a hazard for University staff. This is most significant in terms of increasing the risk of a staff member becoming a target for robbery as identified in the [WorkCover NSW: Violence in the workplace guide 2002](#).

In managing the risk associated with cash handling the immediate goal should be to eliminate the risk altogether by facilitating any transactions in another way, via one of the avenues outlined below. In the case where this cannot be achieved, a risk assessment will need to be undertaken in order to determine whether a cash handling exercise can be safely managed.

4.1 Risk assessment of the proposed Research activity using the Safety Review Form for Research Projects

It is a requirement that a [Safety Review Form](#) is completed and reviewed prior to any Research Project commencing (unless it is known that there are no hazards or risks to health and safety associated with a Research Project). The [form](#) is available on the [Managing Health and Safety Risks](#) webpage. Any Research activities involving participant reimbursement should have the process documented using this form, with a risk assessment undertaken to identify whether the process for participant reimbursement poses a risk to health and safety for any parties involved in the project. In reviewing the Safety Review Form, the reviewer will review the proposed safety controls and confirm that they are appropriate, or may recommend modifications to the process, which may include reference to the following approaches outlined below.

Managing risk associated with cash handling should be conducted with reference to the following hierarchy of controls:

Safety Control Type	Example of control type in practice
1. Elimination (of the risk or hazard)	Utilise unpaid volunteers as participants which eliminates the need for reimbursement
2. Substitution (of the risk or hazard)	Substitute cash reimbursement with a process for electronic funds transfer or issue of a voucher / gift certificate (see 4.2 and 4.3 below)
3. Isolation (of the risk or hazard)	Maintain stock of minimum amounts of unactivated vouchers or gift certificates and distribute to small groups of participants in isolation (see 4.2 below)
4. Engineering (solution for the risk or hazard)	Undertake the reimbursement process in a secure location
5. Administration (solution for the risk or hazard)	Undertake training in cash handling safety, document safe operating procedures to be followed during reimbursement

4.2 Purchase of vouchers remotely with mail receipt and distribution

In those cases where the reimbursement of participants will be undertaken using a shopping voucher or gift card, the purchase and ordering of the vouchers or gift cards should ideally be undertaken remotely via telephone or secure online order utilising a University Purchasing Card in order to facilitate payment. The vouchers or cards can then be delivered to a suitable University location (such as a School or Faculty administration office) while also ensuring that the package for delivery does not indicate that there are vouchers or cards contained within. Purchasing vouchers or cards which are “inactive” until they are activated online by the receiving staff member is also suggested as a way of mitigating any risk of loss or theft of the vouchers or cards in transit.

Once the vouchers or cards are received, arrangements for safe and secure storage, as well as how to transfer the vouchers or cards to participants, will need to be determined. It is preferred that this be by mail out to participants after the activity, distribution to participants individually (on a one on one basis) or in small groups at the end of the Research activity, with the amount to be carried and distributed at any one time kept to a minimum. Directing participants to collect the vouchers from an administrative office is not ideal, as this may introduce risk for those in the office, and could have ethical implications in terms of requirements for ensuring privacy and anonymity for research participants. A [Gift Card Register template](#) provided by Financial Services should be used to record and track vouchers or gift cards as they are issued, and a copy submitted with [Fraedom](#) documentation when reconciling the purchasing card transactions. Card services can provide advice regarding reconciliation of vouchers or cards purchased as a batch which may be distributed over a period of months.

Researchers should contact the professional staff within their relevant administration office prior to placing any purchase orders for vouchers or gift cards, to discuss how best to facilitate these arrangements.

4.3 Use of the Student and Visitor Reimbursement Claim Form

In those situations where it is determined that Research participants must be reimbursed with a specific monetary amount rather than a voucher or gift card to an equivalent amount this should be facilitated using the [Student and Visitor Reimbursement claim form](#) and processes. This will allow the funds to be transferred directly to the participants via deposit to their nominated bank account.

The [form](#) is available on the [Claiming Reimbursements and Refunds](#) web page.

In addition to completing the claim form (which can be done on behalf of the participant) the participant will need to complete a [creditor application form](#) in order to record their details on the University finance system (unless they are already on the system). Information regarding this and the creditor application form are available via the following link:

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/our-environments/do-business-with-uon/contractors-and-suppliers/getting-paid/creditor-codes>

4.4 Other considerations

There may be other situations where the avenues for reimbursement recommended above are not suitable or viable. These will need to be assessed on a case by case basis in conjunction with the risk assessment process mentioned in 4.1 in order to determine whether the risk or hazard associated with the cash handling / reimbursement component of the activity can be effectively managed.

The Health and Safety Team can also arrange cash handling training for staff who are regularly involved in activities or projects with a reimbursement or cash handling component, or whose proposed project or activity is deemed to carry a higher risk to health and safety due to reimbursement or cash handling. The requirement for relevant staff members to attend training may also be recommended by a person reviewing a Safety Review Form for Research Projects.

5. Essential Supporting Documents

All essential supporting documents are referred to above in the procedure with hyperlinks through to the documents where required.

6. Related Documents

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.](#)

[WorkCover NSW: Codes of Practice.](#)

[WorkCover NSW: Cash in Transit Code of Practice 2002.](#)

[WorkCover NSW: Violence web page.](#)