



ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH – ISSUES AND PROCEDURES

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Faculty of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

- For the purposes of Research Ethics:
 - Research means all research that involves human participants as subjects undertaken as a part of formal University activity.
 - The phrase ‘human participants’ refers to persons used in all types of research.
 - Additional safeguards are needed if children are used as participants.
- Qualitative based research projects may include:
 - Personal interviews
 - Questionnaires
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups,
 - Observation of groups *etc.*
- Quantitative and experimental research may include:
 - Questionnaires,
 - Surveys,
 - Trials *etc*

THE FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (FREC)

- Made up of eight members, one from each school in the Faculty, plus one external and one lay member
 - Each faculty has its own Research and Ethics Committee
- Science and Technology FREC members:
 - Prof Chris Harris (Chair) – School of Psychology
 - Prof Judy Edworthy - School of Psychology
 - Dr David J. Price - School of Biomedical & Biological Sciences
 - Dr Matthew Barlow – School of Marine Science & Engineering
 - Martin Beck - School of Computing & Mathematics
 - TBA - School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
 - Dr Jane Grose - External Representative
 - Rev. David Evans - Lay Member
 - Paula Simson - Committee Secretary

APPLYING FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

- You will need to complete a Science and technology application form
 - The application is an electronic one to be found at <https://exchange.plymouth.ac.uk/intranet/research/Public/apply/ethics.htm>
 - There is also an Ethical Approval Guidelines document to help you with the form
- When returning the form you will also need to include:
 - **Participant Information sheet (aka Briefing Document)**
 - **Consent form**
 - There are templates / models to help you with this
- Email all documentation to the Committee Secretary (Paula Simpson), who forwards it to the FREC
- FREC will respond back with approval or comments
 - If there are comments, you will need to re-submit revised documentation
- The FREC will respond fairly quickly to applications
- How long an application takes for approval depends on how quickly you are able to address the comments (if any) made
- This whole process is quite painless!

ETHICAL PROTOCOL:

- Informed Consent
 - All participants in your study must be provided with sufficient information so they are able to give an informed consent to take part in your study
- Risk and Harm
 - Any risk or harm needs to be assessed.
 - It goes without saying any risk or harm should be minimised
- Confidentiality and Anonymity
 - Avoid the collection of 'personally identifiable information'
 - Names are not recorded with raw data.
 - Use an ID number and mapping document to link names with ID
- The Data Protection Act
 - All data collected must comply with the Data protection act
- Experimental Design & appropriate methods
 - Poor experimental design=time wasted for participants, researcher, sponsor + no useful outcomes



COMPLETING THE ETHICS APPLICATION (1)

- The information required is under the following headings –
- 2. Application
 - This section requires general information about the project
- 3. Procedure
 - describe the procedure in straightforward language and in sufficient detail so that a lay person can understand what participants are expected to do and what might happen to them
 - State how long it will take
- 3.4 Deception
 - Deception of participants is possible
 - Need to justify
 - Must also include debriefing document

COMPLETING THE ETHICS APPLICATION (2)

4. Breakdown of Participants

- ▶ Be very clear about who your participants are
- ▶ Participants should not be coerced onto a research project!
 - This section requires general information about the project

5. Non-Vulnerable Adults (those 18 or over)

6. Minors < 16 years

- ▶ Informed consent both from participant and parent (or legal guardian)
- ▶ Opt-in vs opt-out
- ▶ Need to include consent forms and information sheets with form

6. Minors 16-18 years old

- ▶ Desirable to obtain informed consent from the parent/legal guardian, although it is recognised that young people aged between 16 and 18 are generally competent to give independent consent.

COMPLETING THE ETHICS APPLICATION (3)

8. Vulnerable Groups

- ▶ Only for participants of ANY age who are vulnerable by virtue of a medical or psychological condition

9. External Clearance

- ▶ For <18 CRB check

10. Physical Risk Assessment

- ▶ Include things like:
 - ▶ Use of electrodes
 - ▶ Physically stressed (e.g. exercise)

11. Psychological Risk Assessment

- ▶ Risk of psychological harm is more difficult to identify than physical risk.
- ▶ Nevertheless it is the researcher's responsibility to assess psychological risk to participants.
- ▶ Viewing explicit/sensitive material, emotional stress, recounting traumatic events

COMPLETING THE ETHICS APPLICATION (4)

12. Research over the internet

- ▶ Research over the internet is an evolving paradigm, and the committee do not wish to be proscriptive. The main problems that **must** be addressed are
 - 1) how do you ensure participants informed consent and the right to withdraw?
 - 2) how will you maintain confidentiality and data protection ?
 - 3) how will you prevent fraudulent use either by outsiders or by participants?

13. Conflicts of Interest and Third Party Interests

- ▶ Third party interest refers to any other individual, group, or institution who have a stake in the outcome of the research result

INFORMED CONSENT

- Key concept underlying ethics, two parts:
 1. Participant Information sheet
 2. Consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET:

- Participant Information Sheet:
 - Informs participants about the study
 - What is expected of them
 - What their rights are
 - What information is collect
 - And how it is collected
- Include:
 - Aim of research
 - Description of procedure
 - In lay terms
 - Approx procedure time
 - Any video or audio recordings
 - Benefits of proposed research
 - Right to withdraw
 - Right of reply
- The FREC provides a template to help you with this
- The Participant Information Sheet **MUST** be phrased in lay-terms, easy to understand
 - Get someone else to proof read before submitting!

THE CONSENT FORM

- The Consent form
- If your study **only** requires participants to complete and return a questionnaire, then **no** consent form is needed:
 - Consent is implied by returning the questionnaire.
 - But you must include the participant information sheet with the questionnaire.
- For all other studies then a consent form must be signed by each participant.
 - The Ethics Committee provides a model consent form, which will normally suffice for this purpose

FURTHER INFORMATION:

❑ UOP Documents

❑ Research Policies & Procedures:

- ❑ <https://exchange.plymouth.ac.uk/intranet/research/Public/papers/1.%20Research%20Policies%20&%20Procedures/01%20Research%20ethics%20policy.doc>

❑ Ethical Approval forms

- ❑ <https://exchange.plymouth.ac.uk/intranet/research/Public/apply/ethics.htm>

- ❑ Vinson, N.G. & Singer, J.A. (2008). A Practical Guide to Ethical Research Involving Humans. In Shull, F., Singer, J., Sjøberg, D. (Eds) *Guide to Advanced Empirical Software Engineering*. pp. 229-256, Springer.

- ❑ <http://cogprints.org/6740/>

CODES OF PRACTICE

- ❑ British Education Research Association (BERA)
 - ❑ <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/>

- ❑ British Psychological Society (BPS) Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants
 - ❑ http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/support-for-researchers_home.cfm

- ❑ British Sociological Association
 - ❑ <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality>

- ❑ Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Framework
 - ❑ <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/research%5Fethics%5Fframework>

- ❑ Barnardo's Statement on Ethical Research Practice
 - ❑ <http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/research/centres/creole/resources/ethics/barnados.pdf>