

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS  
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**Block approval for taught student projects, generic protocols and class practicals**

*This report builds on the previous paper “Options for Ethical Review of Student projects” which was previously accepted in principle by the Committee. This paper outlines the procedures for ethical review of student projects and puts forward a proposed form for use in such applications.*

*UREC is asked to endorse the procedures and consider whether any other Committees (i.e. learning and teaching) need to be consulted before implementation of the processes.*

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**Introduction**

The guiding principle of this paper, and the procedures for review of student projects was agreed as follows.

Where a student's learning experience would benefit from going through the procedures for ethical review then the normal ethical review procedures should be followed.

These procedures are expected to apply to taught modules, undergraduate and postgraduate, which include a research element. In most cases the projects that students are asked to conduct are similar in nature, and to avoid duplication of effort and problems with the time constraints of the module, these processes outlined below have been developed.

The procedures might also be used in taught modules, undergraduate and postgraduates, where class practicals might raise ethical issues. E.g. taking of blood, questionnaires or interviewing peers or the public.

The system might be particularly useful in the following circumstances:

- Where the student research projects are “low risk”; and /or
- Projects are essentially similar for all students within the group; and/or
- Projects are repeated from student cohorts for more than one year; and/or
- Where the module is too short to allow time to seek individual approval.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The module tutor (leader, Supervisor or equivalent) will be expected to complete the “Taught Student Module Review Form”. The purpose of this form is to describe what is involved in the module and in what parameters the students will be working. (E.g. students will be asked to complete a project about x using interviews techniques). These parameters can be broad, but should be related to the same activity, such as questionnaires, interviews, exercise tests.

That form should then be submitted to the Senior Research Ethics Administrator (or in Medicine & Health the Faculty Ethics Administrator) who will log the application and refer it to the appropriate Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). The FREC will then give “block approval” to that module and delegate approval for individual student projects to the module tutor (or equivalent).

This approval will stand for the number of years stated on the application form, (suggested 5 years) and renewed after that time. Changes made during that time should be reviewed by the Committee (e.g. change of module tutor, or change in parameters.) Applicants should allow at least 6 weeks for before the module is due to commence to ensure enough time to respond to any request for further information from the FREC.

The Senior Research Ethics Administrator will inform the applicant of the opinion of the FREC and will be communicate with the applicant should there be any significant delays in the process.

Once approval has been granted then the applicant (module tutor, leader, supervisor or equivalent) will be expected to approve each individual student project. This role **MUST** be fulfilled by a University member of staff (i.e. a postgraduate student cannot fulfil this role).

This is a condition of the ethical approval. The staff member will be responsible for ensuring that any legal and ethical standards are met and that the individual student project is consistent with the type of research and procedures described in the approved application.

If a student wishes to conduct a project outside the parameters described in the application then the member of staff should either apply to the Committee to change the parameters, or the ask the student to undergo the normal procedures for ethical review of research projects in non-taught courses (i.e. full committee review, or Chair’s Action, whichever is appropriate).

## **Other Considerations**

Consideration of ethics of research is also a vital element of research training. Thus, students should receive training on ethics procedures, standards and legal requirements at some point within their coursework or within module handbooks as appropriate.

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On Behalf of UREC subgroup  
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