

Ethical review of research conducted by taught students Guidance for module leaders and supervisors

Introduction

The University's Research Ethics Policy¹ requires ethics approval to be obtained for all research involving living human participants or the personal data of living human participants. This applies to research projects and dissertations carried out by undergraduate students as well as to research conducted by research students and members of staff.

As an alternative to submitting individual applications for ethical review to the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) module managers can submit a 'block' application to the FREC for the review of the local process for the ethical review of individual student projects.

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, the module leader or manager may apply for 'block' ethical review for the module which can be valid for up to five years.

Applying for 'block' ethical approval might be particularly useful in the following circumstances:

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

Process

1. The module leader/ manager completes the application form for ethical review of a taught student module². Within the 'block' application the parameters of the application are specified, ie which types of project the 'block' approval is intended to cover and which would fall outside the scope of the application. Applicants are asked to detail the process that will be used for reviewing and approving individual projects and provide information about the training and guidance students will receive. 'Block' ethics approval from a FREC can be sought for up to five years.
2. The completed application, along with any relevant supporting documents such as examples participant information sheets and consent forms, is submitted to the relevant Research Ethics Committee via the appropriate mailbox³.
3. It is usually sensible to ask students to complete a form outlining their proposed project and explaining how any ethical issues will be addressed. There are two templates at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/UoLEthicsapplication> which Module Leaders may adapt to suit the module, or a new form can be designed.

¹ <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchEthicsPolicies>

² <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/uolethicsapplication>

³ http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/74/contacting_us/108/frecs

- Generic [Taught Student Declaration Form for taught student modules](#) (for use at School or Module level)
 - [Module Level Ethics Review Form \(MLERF\)](#)
4. The relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee⁴ (FREC) will review the application within 2-3 weeks and then the applicant will receive a response by email; favourable opinion, provisional opinion or unfavourable opinion. A provisional opinion may be issued if the FREC asks for further information or has queries about the application before it can be approved. The University ethical review process is normally completed within **six working weeks**.
 5. The procedure that should be followed within the module itself for reviewing individual applications should be clearly explained in the module handbook.
 6. It is the module leader's responsibility to ensure that tutors are briefed about the details of the block approval and the process for the review of individual student projects.
 7. Situations may arise where students carry out projects which fall outside the scope of the 'block' ethical approval. If this arises then an individual application for ethical review will need to be submitted to the FREC. If this is a possibility students should be encouraged to apply well in advance as the process can take six weeks.
 8. Module managers may wish to consider requiring students to attach evidence of ethics approval as an appendix to their dissertation.

Contact a member of the Research Integrity and Governance team for further advice:
<http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ethicscontacts>.

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August 2013,
updated November 2016
updated March 2019

⁴ http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/74/contacting_us/108/frecs