

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
ETHICS REVIEW PROCEDURES

A. Overview

The ethics review procedure operated by the School accommodates and adheres to the University principles set out at:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp

The most important point to bear in mind is that all members of staff and all students of the School who plan to undertake research which involves human participants, or their data or tissue, should ensure that their proposed research is approved via the appropriate ethics review procedures, prior to commencing the research.

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/practice-.html

B. How to seek approval

There are two routes for seeking ethics approval, one for staff and postgraduate research students, and one for undergraduate and postgraduate-taught students.

a. staff and postgraduate research students

Where ethics approval is required via the School's ethics review procedure, the following standard forms will be used:

1. 'Applicant's ethics checklist'; applicant to complete
2. 'University research ethics application form for staff and postgraduate researchers'; applicant to complete
3. 'University participant information sheet'; applicant to complete if appropriate
4. 'University participant consent form': applicant to complete if appropriate
5. 'Ethics reviewer's comments form': ethics reviewer to complete.

All these forms may be downloaded from:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/staff.html

Completed forms should be sent in the first instance to the School's ethics administrator, Dagmar Divjak (Department of Russian & Slavonic Studies; d.divjak@shef.ac.uk; tel. 27401). The ethics administrator is responsible for forwarding applications to the appropriate number of ethics reviewers, and for designating 'lead' ethics reviewers. A minimum of **three** ethics reviewers are required to review either a staff-led application or a supervised postgraduate student application.

b. undergraduate and postgraduate-taught students

Where ethics approval is required via the School's ethics review procedure, the following standard form will be used: 'University research ethics application form for undergraduate and postgraduate-taught students', which may be downloaded from:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/students.html

Depending on the risk level of the research, the student submits the form to the Supervisor (for low risk) or to the SOMLAL ethics administrator (for high risk). Low risk applications will be reviewed by the Supervisor, high risk applications by two departmental ethics reviewers (one of whom may be the Supervisor).

In consideration of the fact that many individual research projects in undergraduate and PG/T modules involve very similar projects, the University Research Ethics Committee has formulated a special set of procedures to review large numbers of undergraduate and PGT applications en bloc for applications that are very similar thematically: these are referred to as 'generic applications'.

http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/03/26/80/ethics_generic.pdf

The three main points to note are:

1. The supervisor or module convenor is responsible for submitting the project application. If the work of individual students in the module falls within the parameters of the generic application, these students are not required to submit separate applications.
2. In respect of undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate-taught (PGT) research only two reviewers are required, and one of these two reviewers can be the supervisor/module convenor. Where the supervisor/module convenor agrees to be one of the two reviewers the expectation is that normally s/he will also be the 'lead' ethics reviewer (i.e. s/he will decide the ethics outcome taking into account the opinion of the other reviewer involved).
3. Individual supervisors may still wish to have their students complete an Ethics application form for educational purposes. This could form part of the assessment in some modules, and is strongly encouraged as good practice. In this case, the supervisor might check the student's application for evidence of awareness of key ethical issues and appropriate research design, but the application would not require ethics review since it would have been covered by the pre-approved generic project application.

Definition of risk

Research that is potentially HIGH risk involves 'particularly vulnerable participants' and/or focuses on 'highly sensitive topics'. Conversely, LOW risk research neither involves 'particularly vulnerable participants' nor focuses on 'highly sensitive topics'.

i) particularly vulnerable participants [CRB check might be needed, see separate document]

- Infants and children under 18 years of age;
- People with physiological and/or psychological impairments and/or learning difficulties;

- People dependent on the protection or under the control/influence of others (e.g. children, pupils, people in care, young offenders, prisoners);
- Relatives of sick people (e.g. parents of sick children);
- People who may have only a basic or elementary knowledge of the relevant language in which the research is carried out.

ii) highly sensitive topics

- Race, ethnicity, political opinion, religious beliefs/other beliefs of a similar nature, physical or mental health or condition, sexual life;
- Abuse (child, adult); nudity; obesity;
- People affected by conflict situations (e.g. ethnic, religious, tribal conflicts/wars).

C. Ethics reviewers

Only members of staff who have been formally nominated as ethics reviewers may ethically review research projects. Reviewers must be independent of the applications that they review, in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

The ethics reviewers in the School are:

Professor Craig Brandist (Russian and Slavonic Studies)

Professor Gerald Newton (Germanic Studies)

Dr Roel Vismans (Germanic Studies)

Dr Dagmar Divjak (Russian and Slavonic Studies)

Lena Hamaida (MLTC)

A quick reference guide for new ethics reviewers can be found here:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/21/13/QRG%20New%20Ethics%20Reviewers.pdf>

The guidance fact sheet can be downloaded here:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/21/13/ReviewersGuide.pdf>

Initial review will be undertaken within one calendar month of receipt of the application. The timescale for subsequent review will depend on the complexity of any amendments required. (Note that subsequent review is usually unnecessary, if you have followed the initial procedures properly). Please note that model forms and guidance to filling out these forms can be found here:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/form.html

D. Ethics review panel

The School has an ethics review panel, which is a forum in which ethical issues can be raised and discussed and which ethically reviews contentious ethics applications. All ethics reviewers in the School are members of the panel, which is chaired by the ethics administrator.

E. Contact

All enquiries about ethics review within the School should be addressed in the first instance to the ethics administrator, Dr Dagmar Divjak (Department of Russian & Slavonic Studies d.divjak@shef.ac.uk; tel. 27401).