

Checklist for Ethics Reviewers

This checklist is designed to help you to consider all aspects of the research ethics application that you are reviewing, and should address most of the concerns that might come up. However, please remember this is not exhaustive, and each application will raise its own questions.

Summary of the Research

- ? Is there likely to be a worthwhile outcome? (the purpose is not to conduct a methodological review, but research should be of sufficient merit to justify the time and effort contributed by participants)
- ? Do the potential benefits of the research balance against the potential risks to participants?

About the Participants

- ? How will permission or access to participants be obtained? Are the gatekeepers involved identified / on board?
- ? What are the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participants? Are these appropriate?
- ? How will consent be obtained? Is the method appropriate? Can the researcher be sure that participants can give informed consent that is free from coercion? (Informed consent is not necessarily required in all cases, but if it is not to be gained there must be good reason)
- ? What is the potential for harm to participants – pain, discomfort, stress? (almost all research involving participants will have some potential for physical or psychological harm, and the risks should be acknowledged) How will this be minimised/addressed/managed?
- ? Is the researcher likely to uncover any issues unrelated to the research? (e.g. illegal activity, illness or disease, etc.) How will the researcher handle such an eventuality?
- ? Are participants able to withdraw from the research, and how will this be done?
- ? Are participants potentially vulnerable or vulnerable? Are the implications of this addressed?

About the Data

- ? What measures have been taken to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and security of personal information concerning research participants? Are these appropriate to the research? Are these realistic?
- ? Who will have access to the data?
- ? How long will data/recordings/samples be held? Does this take account of any intended future use?
- ? How will they be stored?
- ? Are there any implications for the Data Protection Act 1998?

Supporting Documentation

- ? Are relevant supporting documents included? (e.g. information sheets, consent forms, interview schedules, questionnaires etc.)
- ? Are materials for participants clear and free from technical terms, jargon and abbreviations as far as possible?
- ? Are the materials appropriate for the intended audience (e.g. children)?
- ? Is it clear to participants whether their data will be anonymous/confidential/aggregated?
- ? Are participants able to withdraw? How do they do this?
- ? Will participants understand what is being asked of them and what they are contributing to?
- ? Is it clear to participants what the data will be used for? And any potential future use?
- ? Is it clear to the participants how the data will be managed?
- ? Is it clear to the participants how to complain if they wish to do so?
- ? Is it clear to the participants who is leading the research and how to get in contact with them?

General considerations:

- ? Is there enough detail in the application?
- ? Are the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants considered?
- ? Will the researcher be safe? Is there a procedure in place for risks to the researcher?
- ? Does the research have any implications for the reputation of the University?
- ? Is the researcher suitable? Do they have the necessary skills? Are there any conflicts of interest?
- ? Are there any obvious gaps, ambiguities or uncertainties in how the research will be carried out?