Lead Reviewer Guide to the Online Ethics Review System

Log in to the system at: ethics.ris.sheffield.ac.uk
or you can also access via My Services – View all services under 'E' – ‘Ethics Application System’

Please note: You will need to review the application twice; once to provide your own personal review, and again to bring together the reviews from all the reviewers in order to make a coherent decision on the application.

You may find it useful to also refer to the Staff Applicant Guide to the Online Ethics Review System.

Online Ethics Application screen

You will see a dashboard screen like the one shown below. From here you can manage all features of the ethics review system that you are involved with.

Notifications – this tells you the most recent activity within your Ethics account. When you are assigned as Lead Reviewer it will appear in your notifications. Actions highlighted in blue are items that need attention.

Applications where you have been assigned as a reviewer or Lead Reviewer will also appear here.

You will see the details of the application laid out in different sections.
As you read through the document you can add comments at different points as you wish.

You can add comments alongside the applicant information.
Your comments will appear below the point you have commented on.

You can delete or change these comments at any point until you submit your review.

At the end of the form, you will be asked to make your decision from four options.

- Approved
- Approved with suggested amendments
- Requires compulsory changes
- NOT approved
If you recommend suggested amendments, compulsory changes or for the application to be not approved, you will be provided with a text box in which you can give further details of your decision.

Any final comments given by the other reviewers on their decision will not be visible to the applicant, so it is the responsibility of the Lead Reviewer to ensure that comprehensive guidance is given in this section at the point of final review when the application is returned to the applicant.
Once your review has been submitted, it will appear in your notifications bar as reviewed, and in your dashboard summary as reviewed and you will also receive email notifications of the progress of the application.

As the Lead Reviewer, you will receive notifications when the project has been reviewed by the other reviewers.

You, as the Lead Reviewer, will then be required to review the application again making the final decision and bringing together all the comments into a coherent whole.

Please note: It may be that reviewers differ in their opinions on an application and it is your responsibility to, where possible, reconcile these differences so that the applicant receives clear, unambiguous guidance (you may wish to speak to the other reviewers to discuss the application further).

If you are unable to reach a clear decision (e.g. if there are fundamental differences in opinion) then you should speak to your departmental Ethics Administrator, who can arrange for the department’s ethics panel to consider the application and/or can refer the case to the central University Research Ethics Committee.
When you click on final decision, you will see all of the comments given by all three reviewers (yourself and at least two others), including who made each comment. You can choose to delete or edit the comments, as well as to add further comments.
The screen will also show the final decision by each of the three reviewers. You are then able to assess all of this information and make a final decision on the application.

Once you have made a final decision and selected 'submit review' you are not able to change your decision.

The application will appear in your notifications as having a final decision. You will still be able to view the decision, the application and the comments given.

If you have approved the project, or given approval with suggested amendments, it is likely that you will not deal with this application any further. The applicant will be issued with a PDF approval letter and be permitted to commence with their data collection.

If you have advised that compulsory changes are required or that the application is not accepted, you may be asked to review the application again in the future, to check that the changes have been made. For this review there will normally only be one reviewer; however, if you feel that you would prefer to obtain the opinions of the other reviewers at this stage please discuss this with your Ethics Administrator.

In sections of the application where changes have been made a button appears next to the section heading.

By clicking on the button ‘Changes from last version’ you will be able to see any changes which have been made from the previous version of the application.
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Having reviewed the amended application, you can then decide if the applicant has made the necessary changes and either approve the application (in which case an approval letter will be issued to the applicant), or request that any compulsory changes which have not been made are completed.

You may at some point wish to refer to applications you have reviewed.

You can view a list of all the applications you have reviewed by clicking on the magnifying glass next to “Applications by Others”

Type you name into the box Reviewer Name and click Filter

If you need any assistance in relation to the online system, please contact Anita Kenny a.j.kenny@sheffield.ac.uk