

Research Ethics Approval Policy

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Approval History

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Document History

Version	Date	Reason	Person
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Research Ethics Approval Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

This document sets out the procedure to be followed for all research projects at UCEM, for both student and staff research.

The UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form will be used to oversee, promote and ensure ethical practice in research.

The procedure is based on best practice, and in context of the Fundamental (Key) Ethics Principles (see Section 2), the Research Committee Terms of Reference, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK-GDPR).

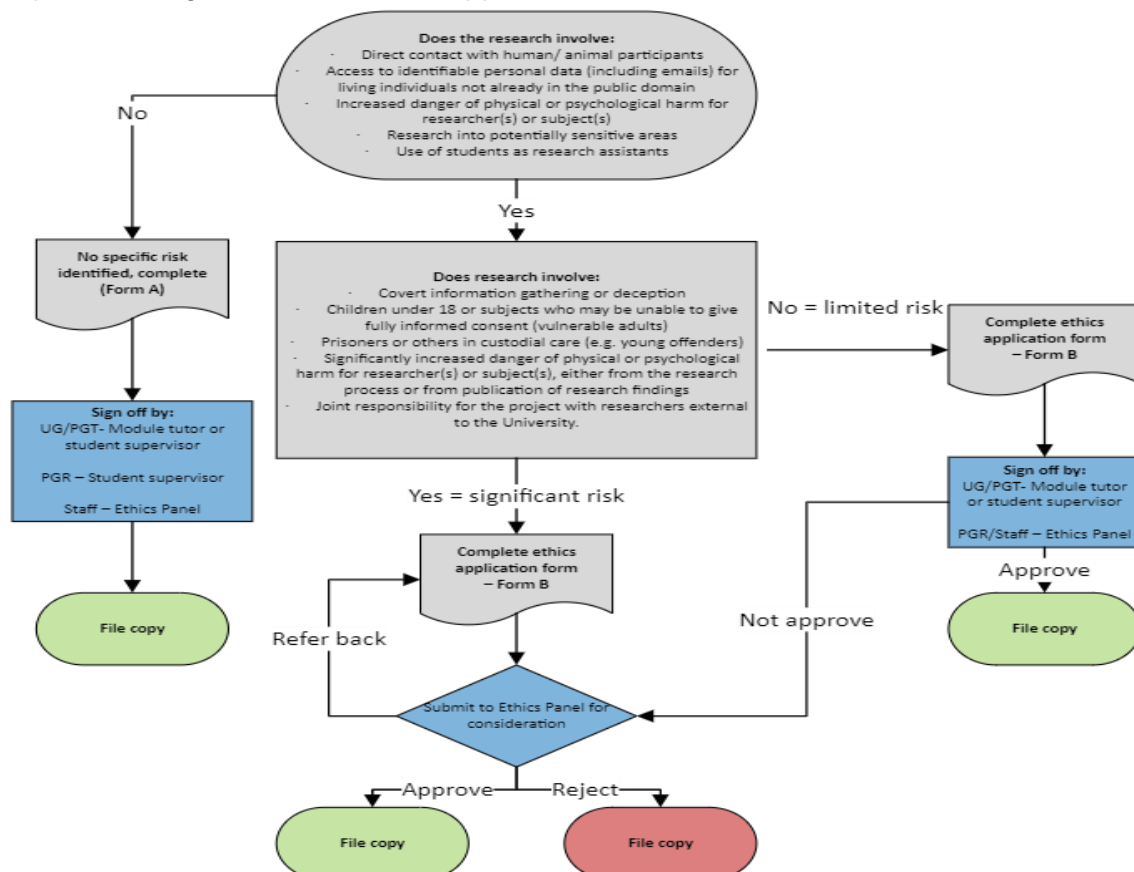
The Chair of the Ethics Panel (or nominee) can provide guidance and support during the research if any issue arises; and to liaise at every step of the research process, so that ethical issues are addressed, and that best practice is implemented during research conducted by UCEM.

2. Key Ethics Principles

The UCEM Research Ethical Approval Policy will help facilitate the aims of the UCEM Code of Practice – Research and Scholarship. Most UK universities' research codes of practice are based on observing the United Kingdom Research Integrity Office's (UKRIO) Code of Practice for Research (2009) which set out the general principles and core standards expected from researchers. This document also demonstrates our commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (UKRIO, 2019), which seeks to provide a comprehensive national framework for good research conduct and its governance.

3. Ethical Approval Procedure

A process diagram for the Ethical Approval Procedure is below:



3.1 Completion of Research Ethics documents

3.1.1 Research Ethics Approval Form

Before starting the research, the must researcher complete the [UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form](#).

The **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form** is for all UCEM research and is aimed at managing any ethical concerns before, during and after the research. This must be sufficiently rigorous so as not to preclude the awarding of research funding to UCEM staff. The checklist is in line with the ethical considerations laid out in the UKRIO Code of Practice for Research Pre-Research Check List (2009 and 2021).

The risk assessment undertaken must therefore consider:

- If the proposed research has any ethical issues and whether it will require an ethics review;
- If the research poses any potential for risks to UCEM, and well-being of researchers and research participants;
- If there are any health and safety concerns;
- If the research complies with all national and/or international legal requirements.
- It must undergo an appropriate ethics review if it involves animals, human participants, or personal data;
- Research must comply with any monitoring and audit requirements;
- All conflicts of interest relating to the research are identified, declared, and addressed;
- Research conforms to benchmarked best practice for the collection, storage, and management of data.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught/ Research students will liaise with their supervisor or module tutor to outline how they will ensure that their research follows best practice for the collection, storage and management of personal, corporate or other sensitive personal data (if applicable).

For any staff undertaking research (or awards) which has been through due process at an external institution, they must submit the external institution's research ethics documents together with the formal 'sign-off' of approval. Additionally, please provide a cover email outlining the research and any material ethical issues.

3.1.2 Research Ethics Information Sheet and Standard Consent Form

Researchers who propose to gather primary source information (for example, using interview, questionnaire, survey or focus group) will also have to prepare a **Participant Information Sheet** and a **Participant Consent Form** and/ or an **Organisation Participant Consent Form** to ensure 'informed consent of the participant(s) as part of the **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form**'; this is in line with benchmarked best practice, and in the context of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK-GDPR):

- The Participant Information Sheet (example can be found in Appendix 1 in the [UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form](#)) is used to share information about the research with the participants.

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- The Participant and/or Organisation Consent Form (example can be found in Appendix 2 and 3 in the [UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form](#) is used to ensure that the participant and/or organisation understands what has been communicated and gives their consent, or if under 18 their parent, carer or guardian's consent, to take part in the research. It is used when the data that is to be gathered in the course of a data collection process might not be anonymised and could be viewed as sensitive personal data¹.

3.1.3 External approval

If the proposed research requires the approval or agreed support of any external organisation such as an employer, firm, school, or company, a letter of approval from the external party should also be supplied (see Appendix 3 in the [UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form](#) as an example).

3.1.4 Liaison with the Ethics Panel, Research Committee and Data Protection Officer

During the completion of the **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form** and supporting documents, the researcher can liaise with both the Chair of the Ethics Panel (or nominated member of Ethics Panel), Chair of the Research Committee (or nominated member of the Research Committee) or the Data Protection Officer to ensure that any research ethics concerns associated with their proposed project have been considered. The reviewers will judge the ethical issues contained within a research proposal and give feedback.

3.2 Approval of 'no specific risk' and 'limited risk' research

For Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught students who have identified their research as 'no specific risk' or 'limited risk,' the Supervisor/ Module Tutor reviews the completed **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form**, and any other supporting documents included. Feedback is provided within three weeks to ensure optimum turnaround of research proposals.

For all Postgraduate Research students and staff research, the Ethics Panel will evaluate whether any research ethics issues identified represent significant ethical problems sufficient to compromise the research, and if there is anything that might reasonably preclude the approval of the research. The Panel will aim to meet and review any submitted **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Forms** on a monthly basis and will ensure feedback is provided within four weeks to ensure optimum turnaround of research proposals.

3.3 Referral of 'significant risk' research

The Ethics Panel will review all applications identified as 'significant risk.'

Research judged by the Ethics Panel to be higher risk could be forwarded for consideration and full scrutiny by the Research Committee. They may approve and ratify, make suggested amendments to the research, or reject the proposal and refer it back to the applicant with reasons and advice on how to develop a new proposal before resubmission.

¹ 'Sensitive personal data' refers to data about participants' racial/ethnic origin; political opinions; religious beliefs; trade union membership; physical/mental health; sexual life; offences; criminal proceedings, outcomes & sentences, considered as 'special categories of personal data' under the definition of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

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Whether a research application is approved or rejected by the Ethics Panel or Research Committee, the outcome decision will be recorded and communicated to all with an involvement in the case.

3.4 Unforeseen Research Ethics concerns encountered during the research process

The Chair of Ethics Panel will not be expected to monitor in detail each piece of research as it is being conducted. However, there may be occasions when ethical dilemmas are encountered that require guidance, or a decision from either the Ethics Panel or the Ethics Panel Chair.

Potential ethical issues may be identified by the researcher; or result from concerns raised by participants or organisations involved in the research. In the event of issues of research ethics arising during research, the original **UCEM Research Ethics Approval Form** should be re-submitted to include the additional concern(s) expressed. This will be sent to the Ethics Panel.

In the first instance it will be for the Ethics Panel to decide whether a meeting is required to deal with the concern or whether it is a matter that can be dealt with swiftly by the Chair of the Ethics Panel. In such cases where the Chair of Ethics Panel feels a full consultation/decision is required from the Research Committee, a meeting may be convened.

If referred to the Research Committee, the Committee has the power to suspend the research until the issue has been resolved satisfactorily.

3.5 Open Access Resource

Where data is not sensitive, all research and student projects are stored to help further research within UCEM's Digital Library on the VLE (virtual learning environment). Where applicable, UCEM may also wish to make research output available as an open-source resource. Researchers have the opportunity to make a declaration in their final submission so that the project remains confidential if it contains any sensitive information. If any disputes or issues that arise in respect of the suitability for a body of work to be made either available as a resource on the VLE or as an open access resource, the ethical concerns will be sent to the Chair of Ethics Panel.

4. References

UKRIO (2019) 'The concordat to support research integrity' [online], Universities UK. Available at: [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity - UK Research Integrity Office \(ukrio.org\)](https://ukrio.org/).

UKRIO Code of Practice for Research Pre-Research Check List (2009 and 2021) <https://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Code-of-Practice-for-Research.pdf>

Signed by: *Angela Lee*

Professor Angela Lee
Chair of the Research Committee

Date: 14th December 2023