



Guidelines for Completing an Application for Ethical Review - Generic Approval

Where a number of undergraduate or postgraduate-taught students will be conducting research that is low-risk and of a sufficiently similar nature to be reviewed together, a single ethics application can be submitted for review by the **Module Convenor**. A generic research ethics review covers more than one sufficiently similar research project. There are two types of generic research ethics review:

Type 1, in which, at a particular stage in their course, a cohort of students undertakes the same research exercise involving human participants. These research projects are training exercises as part of an educational programme, such as a research methods course. Examples might be training in qualitative interview techniques, which involves the students interviewing fellow classmates, or family and friends. The topic of the interview must not involve any sensitive subjects and be considered very low risk.

Type 2, in which students undertake slightly different research projects that are very low risk, and which are sufficiently similar in terms of the following set of parameters to allow for generic research ethics review:

- the selected research topic;
- the chosen questions, aims and objectives;
- the chosen research methods and procedures;
- the type of human participant;
- the nature of the human participation;
- the type of method chosen to inform participants;
- the content of the information sheet, covering letter or written script; and
- the content of the consent form, where relevant.

An example might be a cohort of students that has to undertake questionnaire-based surveys to find out about adults' takeaway food eating preferences, or adults' attitudes towards climate change. **Please note:** the parameters outlined for Type 2 research, are not generally intended to include third year, or PGT student dissertations, where the research involving participants makes up a large component of the coursework - although this does vary between disciplines. Please check with your School Research Ethics Officer¹, or the University Research Governance Officer² for guidance.

In the above cases, the person with primary responsibility for the research projects in question should complete the 'generic' research ethics application (e.g. a supervisor, a course leader, a research director, etc.). The completed application should demonstrate that

¹ Lists of School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs) can be found at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/contacts_sreos_committees/ssarts and http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/contacts_sreos_committees/scitec

² rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk

the request for generic research ethics review covers research projects that are sufficiently similar in terms of the parameters outlined above, and that they constitute low risk research.

Despite the above, supervisors, course leaders or research directors responsible for generic research projects should, for educational and training purposes, ask students to be familiar with the ethical review process, and may include an opportunity for students to complete an individual ethics application as part of their coursework, even though such applications do not necessarily require individual ethics approval.

How to apply for generic ethical approval:

An Application Form for Projects Which Require Ethical Review – Generic Approval is available for completion by Course Convenors.

Where to Submit

The form should be submitted, along with examples of supporting documents that the students will be expected to use (e.g. template Consent Form; Information Sheet etc.) to your **School Research Ethics Officer (SREO)** for approval.

Once the School Research Ethics Officer has approved the form, the SREO should send the application to the **School's C-REC Chair** for final authorisation for the generic ethical review³. The final authorisation will normally be carried out by the C-REC Chair, but may be allocated to a C-REC member.

A *Certificate of Approval* should be provided to the applicant once the review process is complete.

Acknowledgements: University of Sheffield

³ http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/contacts_sreos_committees