

## Procedures for Research Ethics Review and College Delegated Research Ethics Review Groups: Taught Courses

**Background:** Heads of Departments have agreed that reviewing research ethics proforma is an important and legitimate component of teaching and as such is work loaded and supported administratively to an appropriate level. The responsibility of ensuring that this work is undertaken appropriately and in accordance with SHREC guidelines lies with the Head of Department.

### **Important Distinction: Research projects and research.**

Students on taught undergraduate and M-level courses are learning how to do research so the work they undertake is designated as "research projects" in the university policy, whereas Post Graduate Research Students (PGR) and staff undertake research. This distinction is important for review as in taught provision the methodology, design and analyses adopted are frequently part of the assessment process. Ethics review in these instances is primarily about protecting research participants and ensuring that supporting documentation (letters to participants, organisations, information sheets and consent forms) are fit for purpose. In contrast, for staff and PGR research, a poorly designed project that cannot address the research questions posed will be returned for modification as to approve it would be authorising unethical use of participants' time and/or other resources.

### **1. Procedures for Research Ethics Review Taught Courses**

**Scope:** Dissertations/research projects on undergraduate and taught master's courses.

**Rationale:** The university policy reflecting national and international guidelines requires that **all research** undergo ethical scrutiny.

#### **1.1 Projects not Involving Human Participants or Human or Animal By-products**

In disciplines where dissertations do not involve data collection with living participants or the use of human by-products (e.g. library based studies or those involving secondary analysis of data) the research ethics checklist (SHUREC7) should be completed by the student, checked and countersigned by the research supervisor and included in the appendix of the thesis. A copy of the SHUREC7 should be sent to the module tutor for checking that it is low risk and recording. Completion of the SHUREC7 will identify if submission of a full ethics proforma for review is required.

### **2. Research with Human Participants, Human or Animal By-products**

For all research involving direct contact with human participants, whether clinical, biomedical or social, or the secondary use of human and animal materials or specimens, or where there may be other ethical issues, the student **must** complete a full ethics proforma (SHUREC 8a or SHUREC 8b (for sports science, food science or biomedical research)). If the numbers of student projects requiring ethical review are low, the FREC will undertake the review.

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On many taught courses the large numbers of students makes it unrealistic for the FREC to undertake ethics review and the scheduling of FREC meetings may cause unnecessary delays in reviewing student work. For these reasons, Delegated Research Ethics Review Groups may be authorised by the FREC to undertake the review of student projects.

## 3. Procedures for Delegated College Research Ethics Review Groups: Taught Courses

**Scope:** Dissertations/research projects on undergraduate and taught master's courses.

**Rationale:** To be applied on taught courses where the numbers of students submitting ethics proforma for review are too large numbers for the FREC to undertake this work in a timely fashion.

**Organisation:** The research project/dissertation Module Leader will chair the group. Membership to be taken from across the relevant subject group ensuring different methodologies, and relevant sub disciplines in which students are researching are represented. Need to ensure that some core members are research active. Numbers will be determined by the volume of work to be handled. Ultimately, the responsibility of ensuring that this work is undertaken appropriately lies with the Head of Department. Members to be work loaded for undertaking ethics review as an element of teaching.

### 3.1 Responsibilities of Module Leader/Review Group Chair:

1. Ensure that a review procedure is in place that has been approved by the relevant FREC. (Process: Submit a summary of the review procedure proposed and details of the group membership to the FREC for approval when the group is constituted and notify FREC of any significant changes in membership.)
2. Oversee the review process and ensure that any student research where agreement cannot be reached by the Delegated Review Group is referred to the FREC. In addition, the FREC chair is available to advise the DRG on individual projects.
3. Provide pairings of supervisors for first stage review of SHUREC 8a or 8b.
4. Oversee the process of providing feedback to students and supervisors and approval letters with appropriate administrative support.
5. Provide an annual report on the review process to FREC accompanied by a list of all student research that has been approved by the group using the form in Appendix 1.

### 3.2 Procedures for Reviewing and Approving SHUREC 8a and SHUREC 8b

1. For paper submission, two copies of the completed form should be submitted through the appropriate college process for receiving student work. Arrangements for electronic submission may vary.
2. The proforma is independently reviewed by two supervisors (one may be the supervisor for the project) and a Supervisor Reviewer Checklist is completed (appendix 1). The supervisors complete a Supervisor Reviewer Checklist (Example in Appendix 2 but can be modified to meet discipline requirements) to identify

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whether the proforma needs to be reviewed by the relevant Delegated College Research Ethics Review Group.

3. Completed Supervisor Reviewer Checklists are returned to the module tutor for checking and recording.
4. Proforma identified by the supervisors as requiring further scrutiny or where there is disagreement are referred for further review to the Delegated College Research Ethics Review Group.

## 3.3 Supervisor responsibilities

1. Under University policy supervisors are required to ensure that appropriate ethical approvals are in place for the students they supervise before data collection begins.\*
2. Take reasonable steps to ensure the integrity of the student research they supervise.\*
3. Ensure that if the approved procedures on a student project need to change, the ethics committee is consulted and approval is given before data collection commences.
4. Maintain currency of knowledge of university research ethics policy and procedures.
5. Engage with ethics review as requested.

\*Failure to comply with 1 and/or 2 constitutes research misconduct.

## 3.4 Good practice:

- Ensure staff are trained in the principles of research ethics and review.
- Three-year rotation of a proportion of members recommended as this will increase expertise in the subject group.
- Use of administrative support to share the load.



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## Appendix 2

SUPERVISORS MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST TO AID THE DELEGATED ETHICS REVIEW GROUP (DERG) IN THEIR CONSIDERATION OF THE ATTACHED ETHICS PROFORMA. PLEASE ENSURE THAT THIS IS ATTACHED TO THE FRONT OF THE PROFORMA THIS PROFORMA NEEDS TO BE CHECKED WITH ANOTHER SUPERVISOR AS SPECIFIED.

Supervisor name:

DERG review: YES / No

Student name:

Project title:

	Issues to address	Yes/No
1	Does the research involve the NHS or Social Care as defined below? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS or Social Care patients or their carers</li> <li>• Tissues, organs or personal information of the above</li> </ul>	
2	Does it involve vulnerable participants as defined below? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infants and children under the age of eighteen</li> <li>• People with learning or communication difficulties or serious mental health problems</li> <li>• Patients in hospital or under the care of social services</li> <li>• People in custody or on probation</li> <li>• People engaged in illegal activities such as drug abuse</li> <li>• Persons with a condition or illness which is directly being investigated in the study</li> </ul>	
3	Does it involve sensitive topics? E.g. Topics likely to cause significant embarrassment or discomfort to participants; topics relating to highly personal information or involving invasion of privacy; topics related to illegal activity	
4	Does it involve collection of data that is not anonymous?	
5	Are there any other issues that you feel relevant to the consideration of this project?	

If the response is yes to question 1, then NHS or Social Care review is required.

If the responses are yes to questions 2, 3, 4 or 5 review by DERG is required.

Supervisor signature.....

Agreed by Signature.....

Date.....