

Guidance Notes: School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

SALC is committed to developing and supporting the highest standards of research. The *Research Ethics Guideline* resource has been created in order to maintain these high academic standards and associated codes of good research practice. The research portfolio within SALC covers a wide range of fields and perspectives and research within each of these areas places responsibilities of a differing nature on staff (whether as researchers or supervisors) and students subject to course, level, focus and participants. The aim of the *Research Ethics Guideline* is to assist in assessing these factors.

The SALC Research Ethics procedures are designed to ensure that student and staff research projects receive a review proportionate to risks presented by the ethical issues raised by the research proposal. In the case of student research projects, it is expected that supervisors will fully engage with the ethics review process, using the guidance here to assess which form of documentation is required and ensuring that disciplinary norms are adhered to in all instances. The supervisor is responsible for assessing the level of risk with the student and signing off on the appropriate documentation (UREC review level for high risk, SALC review level for medium risk, and the supervisor may sign off research deemed low risk).

Please note that in cases of undergraduate students, dissertation projects must only fall under the low risk category outlined here, unless the supervisor would like to make a case for a student to be granted permission for a higher risk project (for example, using photography/video of human subjects or conducting research in the homes of friends/family). The supervisor must work closely with the student to help the student to complete the online ethics application. All undergraduate ethics documentation should be held and filed by the supervisor.

Information for staff research projects and ethical approval procedures

- **All staff projects must be submitted for UREC review, irrespective of the level of risk. Two routes of UREC review are available to staff in question C1.1 of the revised ethics application form:**
 - [Proportionate UREC](#) for low-risk projects meeting a defined set of criteria
 - [Full UREC](#) for high-risk projects that do not meet the Prop criteria.

Stage 1: Review

The School recognises four levels of *review* to be considered by student researchers (in consultation with their supervisors) before completing any documentation:

- (a) Ethical issues arising from research that does not involve contact with human participants can be considered by referring to disciplinary norms, making use of internal review within subject areas where appropriate;
- (b) Ethical issues arising from research with adults in a public setting, or with children (if carried out in an accredited setting such as a cultural institution, school or youth club and accompanied by a carer or professional with a duty of care), on non-contentious topics may be categorised as *low* risk through completion of the SALC Research Ethics Low risk form.

Low risk projects do not need to be reviewed by the SALC ethics committee. The categorisation of student research projects as low risk requires certification by the supervisor.

- (c) Research with adults and research with children (the latter carried out in an accredited setting such as a cultural institution, school or youth club and accompanied by a carer or professional with a duty of care) that does not comply with the low risk criteria above but does not require research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to lead to significant levels of distress, and that presents a minimal level of risk to researchers and/or research participants, may be categorised as *medium* risk and can be considered within the framework provided by the SALC Research Ethics Template. Medium risk projects will be reviewed by the SALC Research Ethics Committee.
- (d) Research that involves contact with vulnerable or dependent human participants, requires research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to lead to significant levels of distress and/or presents more than a minimal level of risk to researcher or research participants is classed as *high* risk and must be reviewed by the SALC Research Ethics Signatory and will then be forwarded to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for approval. Please note that approval timings on projects requiring UREC assessment will require an additional month following SALC committee dates.

For all the above categories, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all procedures relating to disciplinary norms are followed by their research students. Supervisors are expected to take this element of their role seriously, to familiarise themselves with the relevant policies and procedures, and to ensure that their students follow them.

A separate **fieldwork risk assessment** must be completed if your research takes place off-site even if it does not involve human subjects. A risk assessment identifies risks associated with activities the researcher and/or research participants are engaging in, and associated travel to areas inside and outside of the UK. It also outlines how the researcher will manage these risks.

Stage 2: Assessing ethical risk levels

The School has determined three levels of *Ethical Research Risk* that require review, each of which has a number of associated criteria with implications for the degree of ethical review required.

<https://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/student-intranet/connect/ethics-guidance/>

High risk: The research focuses on groups within society in need of special support, is carried out in an unstable or volatile setting, involves non-standard methodologies or approaches, presents risks to the personal safety of the researcher or research participant beyond what is normal in the setting, or where there is a possibility the research may be distressing to the researcher or research participant in one or more ways. If any aspect of your student research can be described within this frame of reference, please **answer No in response to question C2** in order to proceed to the **UREC form**. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (**in Section B**) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form. Further information on types of approval required for certain categories (e.g. NHS patients or prisoners) can be found on the SALC Ethics intranet pages.

High risk research can be described as research that involves *one or more* of the following:

- Research that engages children under 16 outside of a cultural institution that has been accredited to work with children and young people, school, youth club, or other accredited organisations; Adults or children with learning difficulties; Adults or children who are unable to self-consent; Adults or children with mental illness; Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the researcher; Prisoners or young offenders; Any other group who can be regarded as vulnerable or dependent; NHS patients.
- Research that takes place in an international setting that the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against 'all or all but essential' travel to.
- Research that addresses themes or issues in respect of participant's personal *experience* which may be of a sensitive nature and that therefore may involve any risk of psychological damage or distress to the subject (or the subject's family).
- Research that cannot be completed without data collection or associated activities which place the researcher and/or participants (or any third party) at physical risk or serious inconvenience.
- Research that requires participant informed consent and/or withdrawal procedures which are not consistent with accepted practice.
- Research that involves primary data collection on an area of public or social objection (e.g. terrorism, paedophilia).
- Research that involves the necessary deception of research participants.
- Research that makes use of video or other images captured by the researcher, and/or research study participants, where the researcher cannot guarantee controlled access to authorised viewing.
- Research that will take place in locations where first aid and/or other medical support or facilities are not available within 30 minutes.
- Research that may involve the researcher operating machinery, electrical equipment, or workplace vehicles, or handling or working with animals at the research location(s), for which they are not qualified, and where a qualified operative or handler is not available to act as supervisor.
- Research that takes place in, or involves transport to and from, locations where the researcher's lack of familiarity combined with potential threats in that context may put them at personal risk.
- Research that involves the administration of drugs or use of invasive or semi-invasive procedures, involve the use of tissue from living subjects or the cadavers of or tissue from the recently dead, other than bequeathed cadavers and tissue obtained in the normal course of necropsy.

Medium risk: The research engages adults and/or children (the latter in an accredited setting such as a cultural institution, school or youth club and accompanied by a carer or professional with a duty of care), follows standard procedures and established research methodologies, is carried out in a public setting that does not present risks to the researcher or research participants beyond what is normal in that setting, and does not require research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to lead to significant levels of distress (the research topics are either not contentious or sensitive, or a reasonable person would agree the topic is of legitimate interest and may result in distress in *rare* instances). If your research can be described as medium risk, please

select **'School of Arts, Languages & Cultures'** in response to question A4, **'Yes'** for question C2 and **'medium risk'** for question C2.1.1 in order to proceed to the SALC Medium Risk Ethics form. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (in **Section B**) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form.

Medium risk research can be described as research that does not contravene or conflict with *any* of the following:

Participants (choose one option)

- Adults who are able to give informed consent
- Children in an educational/accredited organisation, who are able to provide assent and an appropriate opt-in or opt-out parental/guardian procedure has been established

Mandatory criteria (must be ticked)

- Participants are NOT classed as vulnerable or dependant
- Topics will NOT lead to a significant level of distress
- Topics will NOT be of a sensitive personal nature
- Topics will NOT be highly contentious
- There is NO significant risk of physical, emotional or psychological harm to participants and any potential harm is likely to be minor and temporary
- Data collection takes place in public or private locations where the safety of the researchers can be protected and privacy of participants can be guaranteed
- Data collection takes place at a time convenient to participants
- Data collection does NOT involve travel to or travel within an international setting that is on the list of countries/regions that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against 'all but essential' travel to.
- 'Optional criteria (if relevant)
 - The research will capture video, audio or photographic material and the researcher is able to guarantee controlled access to authorised viewing during analysis
 - Any public screening of the video, audio or photographic material captured by the researcher will be subject to the consent agreement with the participants

Low risk: The research engages healthy adults or children (the latter in an accredited setting such as a cultural institution, school or youth club and accompanied by a carer or professional with a duty of care) who are able to give informed consent via opt-in.

The research follows standard procedures and established research methodologies, is carried out online or in a public setting that does not present risks to the researcher or research participants beyond what is normal in that setting, and does not require research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to compromise them, or to lead to distress (the research topics are not contentious or sensitive, such as asking about religious beliefs, sexual preferences, political views or illegal activities, or a reasonable person would agree the topic may only result in distress in *extremely rare* instances).

If you are a postgraduate student and your research can be described as low risk, please select **'School of Arts, Languages & Cultures'** in response to question A4, **'Yes'** for question C2 and **'low**

risk' for question C2.1.1 in order to proceed to the SALC Low Risk Ethics form. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (**in Section B**) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form.

Please note: that low risk applications are not assessed by the ethics committee, however, you will be emailed a 'receipt' confirming we have received your application, so please keep this for your records.

Low risk research can be described as research that does not contravene or conflict with *any* of the following:

Participants (choose one option)

- Adults who are able to give informed consent
- Children in an educational setting, who are able to provide assent and a parental/guardian opt-in consent procedure has been established

Mandatory criteria (must be ticked)

- Participants are NOT classed as vulnerable or dependant
- Topics are NOT of a contentious and/or sensitive nature
- Topics are NOT distressing
- Topics are NOT of a confidential nature
- There is NO risk of physical, emotional or psychological harm to participants
- Ethical issues DO NOT include the risk of breaking confidentiality due to safeguarding concerns or disclosure requirements
- Ethical issues DO NOT include the risk of possible coercion of participants
- Data collection will take place in a public or semi-public space/building (i.e. high street, University campus, school building) or in a domestic environment familiar to the researcher (i.e. family home or friend's residence)
- Data collection will take place within normal working hours and at a time convenient to participants
- Data collection will take place exclusively within the UK, EU or EEA

Optional criteria (tick all that apply)

- The research will capture video, audio or photographic material and the researcher is able to guarantee controlled access to authorised viewing during analysis
- Any public screening of the video, audio or photographic material captured by the researcher will be subject to the consent agreement with the participants
- The research requires the collection of personal data, but data will be anonymised prior to analysis and write up or presented in a format which the participant has explicitly agreed and consented

Supporting documents may include recruitment adverts/emails, draft questionnaires, draft interview topic guides, participant information sheets and consent forms, insurance declaration form and risk assessments, depending on the research methodologies employed. Please ensure consent forms and participant informant sheets are GDPR compliant. You can find templates here:

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/ethics-integrity/ethics/app-prep/>

Insurance information

For low and medium risk projects that answer 'yes' to any of the insurance questions we will log these and send them to the insurance office for completion at the end of the academic year. You are able to start your research without prior approval from the insurance office. If your research is conducted in areas of the world that are regarded as risky you need to complete the appropriate Risk Assessment Forms and in some cases might need approval by the Insurance Office.

Only UREC applications that are deemed 'high risk' and where the research is conducted abroad **and** has a medical content, **or** where there is a "yes" in **any** of the other insurance boxes will need prior approval from the insurance office before the research can be carried out. You must then wait for an official email from the insurance office before starting your research.

Please contact salc.ethics@manchester.ac.uk if you have any queries about insurance.

What to do next

Agreement to proceed with research at each of these levels is provided by an appropriate University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), the SALC Ethics Committee, or by the supervisor/tutor respectively.

- For **low risk student projects**, please select School of Arts, Languages & Cultures' in response to question A4, 'Yes' for question C2 and 'low risk' for question C2.1.1 in order to proceed to the SALC Low Risk Ethics form. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (in Section B) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form.
- For **medium risk student projects**, please select School of Arts, Languages & Cultures' in response to question A4, 'Yes' for question C2 and 'medium risk' for question C2.1.1 in order to proceed to the SALC Medium Risk Ethics form. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (in Section B) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form.
- For **high risk student projects**, please select '**No**' in response to **C2** in order to proceed to the UREC form. Please remember to add your supervisor as the Co-PI (in Section B) to enable you to request their signature at the end of the form.
- For **staff projects**, please review the information in section C and select the appropriate answers for your project in order to proceed to the UREC form.

If you have any queries about your specific project, please email the SALC Ethics Team:

salc.ethics@manchester.ac.uk