

Guidance Notes: School of Social Sciences

Ethical Approval for Research Involving Adults Able to Give Informed Consent

The School of Social Sciences template should be used only for research projects conducted by students under the supervision of academic staff. The template is **NOT** to be used for staff projects, as **all members of staff must seek ethical approval via Proportionate or full UREC.**

Students should complete the template in order to seek ethical approval for research projects that fall within defined ethical boundaries and comply with the terms and conditions of the template, which has been approved for use by the University Research Ethics Committee.

You should only use this template if your research:

- Involves only participants who are non-vulnerable adults who are able to give informed consent. **Excluded are:**
 - NHS patients
 - children under 18
 - adults with learning difficulties
 - adults who have a terminal illness
 - adults with mental illness
 - adults with dementia
 - adults in care homes
 - adults or children in emergency situations
 - prisoners or criminals
 - young offenders
 - users of illegal drugs or illegal substances
- Will obtain informed consent from all participants;
- Does not involve physically invasive procedures;
- Does not involve activities that pose a significant risk of causing physical harm or more than mild discomfort;
- Does not involve activities that pose a significant risk of causing psychological stress or anxiety;
- Does not require participants to take part in activities that pose a significant risk of having an adverse effect on their personal well-being (e.g. physical and psychological health), social well-being (e.g. social standing, social connectedness) or economic well-being (e.g. employment, employability, professional standing);
- Does not involve collecting or revealing data that enables individuals, groups or organizations to be identified in such a way that they could experience significant negative effects on their personal, social or economic well-being;
- Does not involve activities that pose a significant risk of harming the researcher(s).

Please note that students will need to first select whether they are conducting a **dissertation, thesis or course unit project***.

***A course unit project** is defined as a small, bespoke piece of data collection that will be used for a specific assignment within your course. This will **NOT** form a part of your dissertation or thesis.

Course unit project

If you are conducting a course unit project, you **MUST** ensure that your project meets the following criteria:

My research will engage one or more of the following groups (tick all that apply):

- Adults who are able to give informed consent in a way that accords with accepted practice.
- Participants in professional roles who will be interviewed about their professional practice. Interviews will be conducted in their work setting.
- Participant groups limited to peers, colleagues and family members.

Mandatory Criteria (ALL must be ticked)

- My research will NOT involve vulnerable or dependent groups.
- My research will take place in public or private locations where my safety can be protected and the privacy of participants can be guaranteed.
- My project will be conducted with participants inside the UK or EU or an international setting that is NOT on the list of countries/regions that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against 'all but essential' travel to.
- My research will NOT involve the collection of video/photographs of research participants.
- My research will NOT require research participants to provide information likely to cause them significant levels of distress.

If your course unit project does not meet these criteria, please speak with your supervisor or programme administrator for advice.

Dissertation or Thesis

If you are conducting your **dissertation or thesis** you **MUST** ensure that your project meets the criteria for low or medium risk if you wish to use the School's template for approval. If your project does **NOT** meet either of these sets of criteria you **MUST** apply for full UREC review of your project.

Low Risk

Low risk projects are defined as meeting the following criteria:

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

Medium Risk

Medium risk projects are defined as meeting the following criteria:

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.^[1]

^[1] There may still be data protection and/ or ethical issues in relation to other aspects of the project – as outlined under mandatory criteria and regardless of location -that need to be mitigated and therefore projects that are conducted online should not be automatically assumed not to be high risk. In considering data protection issues, researchers should also be aware that use of online

methods may create potential data security issues in some cases for researchers and/ or participants. In such cases Full UREC review would be appropriate.

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.

Students: If your project fits these criteria please select please select **Division/School Review for Question A5, 'School of Social Sciences' for Question D5.2** and the appropriate option for **Question L2** in order to proceed to the School of Social Sciences template which will be sent for school review.

Students: If your project does not fit these criteria please select **full UREC Review for Question A5**, to proceed to the UREC application form.

If you are a member of **staff**, please select **Proportionate or full UREC Review for Question A5** to proceed to the UREC application form.

If your project will involve any of the following, you must seek ethical approval via the Health Research Authority (and via the IRAS system instead of the ERM system):

- Involves data from NHS patients,
- Involves data relating to NHS staff that is not limited to non-sensitive questions about their professional role, and
- Involves users of other UK Health Department services.

If you have any queries about the specifics of your project, please contact:

- For staff: the SoSS Research Support Office (soss-research-ethics@manchester.ac.uk)
- For students: SoSS-Student-EthicalApprovals@manchester.ac.uk