Ethics procedures for dissertations

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Jan 2024

This video explains:

- When you need vs don't need ethics

- An overview of different ethics procedures available to you and what you need to do if your project requires an application

Available options

No need for ethics

Simplified (supervisor) ethics

Regular ethics application

You'll need to apply for Ethics if you want to collect data from human participants or use the data they have generated, e.g.

- You want to organize **usability testing** of your website, app, device, dashboard, design etc.
- You want to **gather some additional data**, e.g. through **surveys**
- You want to **install IoT sensors** in places where others live/work to collect envrionmental data
- You want to **scrape new data from social media** to use in your project
  - No need for ethics if you use an existing dataset

Ethics is not just about a personal data – it's broadly about consent and studying others.

Even if you're planning to collect only **anonymous data** and/or **no identifiable information**, you will still need an ethical approval

What projects do NOT need ethics

You <u>won't</u> need to apply for Ethics if:

- You're just building something and want to **evaluate it yourself**, e.g. by using a heuristics evaluation
- You want to test your website/app/dashboard/device/etc. with your **supervisor** and won't involve anyone else
- You're focusing on developing an algorithm and your evaluation means **comparing different algorithms/compression methods** etc. and no humans or human data is involved
- You're using an **existing dataset** that has already been reviewed by an ethics committee (either at Cardiff or elsewhere), e.g. one supplied by your supervisor

Simplified (supervisor) ethics

Simplified (supervisor) ethics

You can use the simplified ethics procedures (i.e. approval by a supervisor) if:

- **You're running one of the approved study types**:
    - anonymous survey (to gather requirements for the system you're developing)
    - Usability evaluation (questionnaire, interview, think aloud)
- **You're not meeting the full review criteria**, i.e,. You're not working with vulnerable participants and your dissertation does not focus on a potentially sensitive topic

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School of Computer Science and Informatics – CM3203 One Semester Individual Project
Dissertation Project Ethics Form

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title:	*[insert]*			
Student Name:	*[insert]*			
a) Approved methods to be used:	[Anonymous survey to gather requirements for the system ☐] [Usability evaluation ☐] *If usability evaluation, please specify what it will include:* [Questionnaire ☐] [Interview ☐] [Think-aloud session ☐]			

b) Please provide a summary of your project, including its aims and the methods you will be using:

[insert]

		Yes	No
c)	Do you have any potential conflicts of interest to declare? *Information and guidance on conflicts of interest is contained in the Research Integrity Online Training Programme and the Research Integrity and Governance Code of Practice.*	☐	☐

d) *If you have answered 'yes' to b, please confirm the action you propose to take to address such conflicts:*

[insert]

e) What do you consider to be the ethical issues or considerations specific to your project? How do you intend to address these?

[insert]

		Yes	No
f)	Are you planning to collect data from any users from outside of your group? *This includes collecting data from social media.* *If No, skip to Section 2.*	☐	☐

g) If working with human subjects, please confirm your participant group and how you will identify and recruit such participants:

[insert]

h) How many participants are you aiming to recruit?   10 or less ☐   11-20 ☐   21-49 ☐   50+ ☐

i) Please describe the consent procedures/arrangements for the project – will informed consent be obtained from participants, and if so how? (If informed consent will not be obtained, then your project is **NOT** eligible for supervisor sign off.)

[insert]

2. IS YOUR PROJECT ELIGIBLE FOR SUPERVISOR-ONLY REVIEW?

Does your project involve any of the following:	Yes	No
a) Activity within, or involving, the NHS or health and social care systems (e.g. patients, service users, staff, resources or data).	☐	☐
b) The collection or use of Human Tissue, as defined by the Human Tissue Act 2004	☐	☐
c) The use or involvement of animals.	☐	☐
d) The subject areas of terrorism, extremism or radicalisation. *Note: these terms are defined in the University's Security Sensitive Research Policy.*	☐	☐
e) Primary data collection without the prior consent of participants* **The following are specifically excluded from this criteria: (1) observation of people in a public*	☐	☐
space where no identifiable information is being captured; (2) use of publicly available information or secondary data where no identifiable information is being captured.		
f) An element of deception, including covert activity.	☐	☐
g) Children under the age of 18 or 'at risk' (vulnerable) adults or groups.	☐	☐
h) Topic areas likely to be considered highly sensitive for participants. *Note: examples include sexual behaviour, illegal activities, political, religious or spiritual beliefs, race or ethnicity, experience of violence, abuse or exploitation, and mental health.*	☐	☐
i) Access to records of a sensitive or confidential nature, including 'Special Category Data' or criminal offence data.	☐	☐
j) Intrusive or invasive procedures *Note: examples include the administration of substances, vigorous exercise, procedures which may involve pain or more than mild discomfort to participants (including the risk of psychological distress or anxiety – more than the risks encountered in everyday life).*	☐	☐
k) More than a minimum risk of harm to the safety and wellbeing of participants **and/or** the student conducting the project	☐	☐
l) Detailed demographics or background information collected beyond age or gender. Age question asks for a specific age (as opposed to using age ranges).	☐	☐
m) Any other activity which clearly falls outside of the parameters of the **Module Ethics Framework** or raises other material ethical concerns?	☐	☐

If you have selected **"Yes"** to any of the above, your project is **NOT** eligible for Supervisor sign-off and must be reviewed by the SREC. **Please do not continue with this form.** You must instead complete the SREC's '**Application Form for Ethical Review'**. See COMSC Ethics website for details.

If you have selected **"No"** to all of the above, your project **is eligible for Supervisor sign-off** and you must complete the rest of this form. Your project does not require a SREC application.

3. DECLARATIONS – For use where project IS eligible for Supervisor sign-off.

STUDENT DECLARATIONS

a. The information in this form is accurate to the best of my belief. I take full responsibility for it.	☐
b. I have read, and will adhere to, the Module Ethics Framework.	☐
c. I have completed the University's Research Integrity Training and believe we have the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct the project as proposed.	☐
d. I am familiar with the Ethics Policy for Human Research, Research Integrity and Governance Code of Practice and Academic Integrity Policy and will abide by all standards relevant to our project.	☐
e. [If collecting user data] I have submitted all final version participant-facing documents and data collection tools to our supervisor or the module leader for approval prior to commencing data collection.	☐
f. [If collecting user data] I will notify our supervisor or the module leader of any amendments to our project and seek approval of any substantial changes to participant-facing documents or data collection tools.	☐
g. I will notify our supervisor or the module leader of any ethical issues that arise during the project.	☐

Signed:

Print names:

Date:

SUPERVISOR DECLARATIONS

a. I have reviewed this form and I am satisfied that the project, as proposed, meets ethical standards.	☐

Short overview of the process:

1. Discuss your study plan with your supervisor to ensure a simplified process is suitable
2. Fill in the form and prepare the participant-facing documents (information sheet, consent form, recruitment letter; templates are provided)
3. Complete the [Research Integrity Training](#) if you haven't done it for other modules
4. Have them signed off by your supervisor

You cannot start recruitment until you receive your supervisor's approval.

Regular ethics

You need to follow the regular ethics procedures if:

- You want to run an experiment or a study that uses a study design other than a survey, interview or a usability study, e.g. if you want to run a **controlled experiment** or a **home study**
- Your study does not meet the simplified ethics criteria, e.g. you want to evaluate an **IoT device**, analyse data scraped from **social media**, or ask participants to use your app **at home for a week**
- You want to recruit participants from **vulnerable groups**, e.g. children, older adults, people with disabilities
- Your research focuses on **a sensitive or polarising topic**, e.g. mental health, misinformation, political views

How the regular process works

Short overview of the process
1. Fill in all necessary documents
2. Have them signed off by your supervisor
3. Submit to the ethics committee via email (comsc-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk)
   - You may be asked to revise the documents or send any missing information before we can review the application
4. Wait for the response
   - This can take 2-3 weeks, depending on the time of year
   - If you're application requires "full" review, it may take 4+ weeks
5. Submit revisions if necessary

You cannot start recruitment until you receive a favourable opinion.

https://www.cs.cf.ac.uk/ethics/

Regular application: forms and templates

What documents you need:

- **Individual Application Form**

- Consent form and Participant Information Sheet

- Description of your project (can use the description from PATS)

- "Data collection tools", i.e. any questions or tasks participants will have to do, keywords for social media scraping etc.

- Recruitment messages

- Research Integrity Training certificate for you and your supervisor

https://www.cs.cf.ac.uk/ethics/

Regular application: Outcomes

Applications are reviewed by multiple reviewers and those with any conflicts of interest will be excluded. Where the committee can reach an agreement, an outcome letter/email will be issued with one of the following outcomes:

- **A favourable opinion** – the proposed study/data collection can go ahead
- **A favourable opinion with conditions** – the proposed study/data collection can go ahead after confirming specific changes requested by the SREC

- **A provisional opinion** – further information and/or revisions are required

- **An unfavourable opinion** – the proposed study/data collection cannot go ahead

Summary

No need for ethics	Simplified (supervisor) ethics	Regular ethics application
↓	↓	↓
If **no human data** from people outside of the research team or using an **existing dataset**.	If conducting one of the **approved study types** (anonymous survey, usability evaluation) and **does not** focus on a sensitive topic.	Everything else! **Social media** and **IoT evaluations** fall into this category. Any research on **sensitive topics** or with **vulnerable populations** may require a full review.

Thank you

COMSC Ethics Committee

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