

Guidance for Schools on the Ethical Review of Research

Introduction

Ethical review (and approval) is required for all projects where the research involves participation of human subjects, their data and/or their specimens (even where the applicant indicates that there is only minimal risk).¹ This document outlines the minimum expectations for Schools/Departments/Faculties in their ethical review processes and specific guidance on the composition of School, Department or Faculty Research Ethics Committees (hereafter referred to as RECs to encompass School, Department or Faculty Committees as appropriate) and associated processes.

Whilst the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics outlines the guiding principles for conducting research, this document provides guidance on the processes and procedures to follow. The University of Nottingham operates a devolved structure for ethical review, reflecting the diverse nature of research across the University. An important element is the Frequently Asked Questions section which aims to cover some of the key queries that arise from delivering a complex process in a diverse organisation.

Wording in **bold** indicates a minimum requirement by School/Faculty Research Ethics Committees. Writing not in bold recommends good practice. Writing in *italics* represents guidance on interpretation based on discussions at the original Policy for Ethical Review Working Group, University REC or from Professional Services at the University.

A guiding principle should be that ethical review should assess the likelihood and magnitude of risks, considering both the minimal risk of serious harm, and moderate risk of minimal harm. All parties involved with research should aim to maximise the benefit of the research and minimise any harm to participants, considering ethical issues throughout the research lifecycle. The aim of ethical review is to ensure that research is conducted safely and appropriately, rather than to limit research activity.

Research Ethics Committees

Composition

- **RECs must be multidisciplinary and comprised of both men and women.** *Within small groups/Departments or Schools this may be hard to achieve – in this case it is recommended that groups join with others in the same Faculty to enable appropriate multidisciplinary mix to be achieved. Schools should interpret the meaning of multidisciplinary within the School/Faculty context relevant to the discipline.*
- **RECs should include at least one lay member who is not a member of the School, Department or Faculty and is not a member of teaching or research staff.** Examples of appropriate lay members might include professional persons, individuals from funding agencies or charities, community leaders.

¹ Colleagues should be aware that there is a distinction between research and audits conducted for evaluation and research. A useful guidance leaflet has been produced by the then National Research Ethics Service (NRES) which aims to aid researchers and committees in deciding on this distinction: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/documents/2013/09/defining-research.pdf>

Some Committees may have School/Department/Faculty associated lay members already – e.g. from project advisors, Industrial Academic Boards etc. Other potential lay members may be non-teaching/research members of University staff external to the School/Dept/Faculty. Ideally lay members will already have an appreciation of research requirements or goals, but should not have a personal interest in the research itself. A typical term of office for a lay person as a minimum would be three years, but this is up to individual Committees to decide as appropriate. Lay members are expected to attend at least one committee meeting per year to comment on policy and process, but are not expected to normally serve as active reviewers of ethics submissions. They may also be consulted on their views in cases that require specific consideration such as the occasional audit of School practices or input into the Annual Review process.

- **RECs should have a minimum of seven people. This includes a Chair (appointed by the Head of School/Department or Dean if at Faculty level), a layperson, a representative from another Department, School or Faculty, and at least four research active members of the Department, School or Faculty. Overall the REC must have broad experience of and expertise in the areas of research regularly reviewed by the REC.** The members of the REC will ideally be taken from a range of seniorities and levels of expertise amongst staff. It is expected that RECs will be provided with the appropriate level of administrative support. *For smaller Schools, a Committee of seven may be difficult to establish, in this case it may be appropriate to refer to a Faculty Committee. The expertise of the members of the Committee will vary depending on the background and discipline- in some disciplines it is reasonable to expect that most or all teaching and research staff will have had formal training in ethical review processes and issues, whereas in others this is less likely to be the case. If formal training or experience of ethics has not been received by Committee members then it is expected that they should undergo some form of training on ethical review process and issues.*

Frequency and format of meetings

- **Committees are expected to meet face to face and hold a minuted meeting at least once a year.** Committees that are regularly reviewing research submissions that are more than a minimal risk may meet more regularly to share expertise and develop good practice. *In practice, most review is likely to take place via electronic communication, particularly in areas where there is a need for fast turnaround on large volumes of applications, and where there are standard protocols for dealing with routine challenges, such as working with children (in the School of Education) or storage of data.*

Process of review

- **Ethical review (and approval) is required for all projects where the research involves participation of human subjects, their data and/or their tissue (even where the applicant indicates that there is only minimal risk).** For more detail refer to the University of Nottingham [Code of Research Ethics and Research Conduct](#) (pg. 15).
- **The concept of ‘minimal risk’ is adopted to inform the level of scrutiny that an ethics submission should receive. It can be defined as a project where the actual or potential risk of harm to participants (and others affected by the proposed research) is minimal (see page 8-10, [ESRC’s Framework for Research Ethics 2015](#) for examples of this type of research. All applicants should identify if they consider their projects to involve minimal risk or more than minimal risk.** An individual committee may require this level of risk to be indicated via a checklist of some form as part of an ethical review submission. Examples of these checklists are provided on the Research Ethics workspace.
- **The level and type of ethical review may vary, with the principal determinant for the type of review being the risks associated with the project.**

1. **In the case of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught course projects, and taught elements of Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) programmes, it is acknowledged that many student project programmes may involve large numbers of projects of minimal risk. If the REC deems it appropriate, a supervisor or module convenor may approve Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught project work where they are confident that the project is of minimal risk. In these cases, the supervisor or module convenor is responsible for ensuring that the project follows standard procedures that adhere to requirements of the ethics committee. If such standard procedures are not available, even if the project is of minimal risk, the proposal must be submitted for approval to the REC. The forms associated with all Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught course project ethical approval (including those approved by a supervisor) must still be submitted via the normal REC process for purposes of audit and to allow confirmation that a correct judgement of minimal risk has been made. It is expected that ethical approval given to standard project procedures should be reviewed by the REC every three years as a minimum.**
 2. **For projects that are not Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught projects, where an applicant has indicated that the research activity is of minimal risk this judgment must be confirmed by the REC (not the supervisor or the Principal Investigator of the project). This will normally be by 'light touch' review, by a minimum of two members of the REC.**
 3. **Where a research activity has been judged to be of more than minimal risk, it must be reviewed by a REC.** It is up to individual RECs to determine how a routine full review takes place – a minimum of two reviewers must consider each application. *Some Committees may wish all, or particularly challenging, reviews to be viewed by all members of the REC. If a case is identified as raising particularly challenging or difficult issues then it is the Chair of the Committee's responsibility to ensure that an appropriate level of review takes place – it is likely that such a proposal will require full review.*
 4. **The Chair of the Committee is responsible for the appropriate selection of reviewers. All ethical review applications and decisions, including supervisor or module convenor approvals should be recorded.** This could take the form of meeting minutes or an overview spreadsheet that summarises all decisions made, with any key issues highlighted. This is intended to support the process of completing the Annual Monitoring process and develop good practice throughout the University.
- **Ethics submissions are required for work involving collection of data for the purposes of research (see FAQs supporting documentation at Appendix A for more on this issue). This research may form part of the activities conducted whilst participating in a taught module or may be a dedicated research project as part of a taught or research course, or academic practice. Ethics submissions would not normally be required for collection of data that would routinely be expected to occur during the conduct of reflective academic practice (e.g. reviewing teaching approaches).**
 - **Ethics is also distinct from Risk Assessments – a Risk Assessment should, if needed, be formally conducted according to the guidance found here:**
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/policies-and-guidance/risk-assessment/risk-assessment.aspx>

Requirements of the ethics submission

- **For undergraduate and postgraduate (both taught and research) student applications, the applicant's research ethics review submission should be signed by the applicant's supervisor in addition to the student themselves. For staff research projects, the Principal Investigator of the project must sign the research ethics submission. All applications must be submitted to the REC.** If appropriate signatures are not included on an application form (submissions via University email can substitute for paper signatures) then an application should not be considered by a Committee and approval should not be granted.
- **Forms may be submitted electronically, and submission/reply from a University of Nottingham email address can be used in place of a paper-based signature.**

Approval for ethics submissions may not be granted with retrospective effect. If a case comes to light where it appears ethics approval should have been sought, and was not, this should be handled according to the process set out in section 12 (page 12) of the *Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics*. It may be appropriate to use standard paperwork to formally notify the ethics committee that the study took place and that approval was not obtained, but this would NOT constitute retrospective approval of the study. **Where the research is ongoing, the researcher may seek prospective approval for the remainder of the study. The Committee may also give a view as to whether approval would have been given for the study had the review taken place originally. In such instances where the Committee would not have granted approval and/or prospective approval is not given, the matter should be referred to the Head of School.**

Location of Committees

All Schools/Departments/Faculties either have their own Research Ethics Committee, or have access to a Committee (or Committees) to which they submit their proposals. The University of Nottingham ethical review structure devolves decision making to the school level. The Universities research ethics committee does not review ethics applications; rather it defines policy and procedures, and provides quality assurance and monitors delivery in schools. If you are unsure of the appropriate Committee for your submission, please consult your local School Research Ethics Officer, details of which can be found on the Research Ethics workspace, or alternatively contact Catherine Jew in RGS (<mailto:Catherine.Jew@nottingham.ac.uk> or telephone +44 0115 8467107).

These guidelines were first produced in 2010/11 by a Working Group appointed by the University's Research Ethics Committee, and then updated by Professor Sarah Sharples and Dr Claire O'Callaghan after consultation with Research Ethics Officers. This latest version (January 2016) has been developed by Catherine Jew in consultation with the UREC and Research Ethics Officers.

Appendix A - Frequently Asked Questions on Ethical Review

This document is intended to provide informal advice to those responsible for implementing and undergoing ethical review within the University of Nottingham. This document has been produced by the Research Policy Officer, who provides secretariat to the University's Research Ethics committee (UREC), in consultation with UREC and School Research Ethics Officers. It provides supplementary guidance to the University's formal policy on the Ethical Review of Research.

The advice given in this FAQ draws on several sources including the University of Nottingham [Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics](#), the University's Policy for Ethical Review, ethical review practice currently implemented across the University, the [Economic and Social Research Council's Research Ethics Framework \(ESRC\)](#) and guidance from professional services across the university. It should be noted that it is not always possible to provide a definitive answer – in many instances research will need to be looked at on a case by case basis.

1) Who should be on the ethics committee?

Ideally, an ethics committee should be a mix of seniorities, with all members having diverse knowledge and expertise in research ethics issues relevant to your subject area. A committee should be multi-disciplinary, but the extent of multi-disciplinarity is likely to vary depending on your discipline. Committees should also include lay members and those from outside your School/Department/Faculty. Committees should also ensure a balance of gender.

2) Who can act as a lay member on a committee?

Examples of appropriate lay members could be members of industrial advisory boards, contacts from past research projects or members of the University who do not have an active academic or research role. The role of a lay member is to provide impartial views on proposed research projects and normally provide non-technical expertise in the development of ethical review. One aspect on which it is particularly useful for a lay member to comment is on the language of material to be distributed to the general public who may not have any technical or subject-specific expertise.

3) Is it OK to have a Faculty committee?

Yes, this is already done in some parts of the university and can be particularly useful when there are low volumes of business in small Schools or Departments who share similar ethical issues. A Faculty committee should include representatives from all parts of the faculty. If you have a Faculty committee there is no need for an additional School/Departmental committee.

4) I'm ethics officer, am I also Chair of the committee?

Not necessarily. The Chair is responsible for managing the review process and overseeing review decisions. The School Research Ethics Officer is responsible for communications about required procedures and good practice applied within local committees – in some cases this may involve chairing the committee, in others they may work in conjunction with a chair. A full description of the responsibilities of School Research Ethics Officers is available on the Research Ethics Workspace. A list of Ethics Officers is also available on the workspace.

5) Can supervisors review and approve their own students' proposals?

This is currently done within Departments/Schools for taught UG and PG project work where supervisors have particular expertise or training in issues related to ethics, but this practice should be used with caution. A good approach is to develop a standard protocol (e.g. for an activity such as conducting interviews to gather user attitudes or opinions) that can be applied by all students within activities such as coursework. It is acceptable for this protocol to be reviewed by the relevant ethics committee; the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the protocol is applied by all students. This approach is only relevant where the activities are of 'minimal risk'. Any research that involves the NHS including NHS staff or facilities must receive ethical approval by the HRA or NHS RECs. In all cases the appropriate paperwork must be completed, signed by applicant and supervisor and archived/stored.

6) What is meant by more than minimal risk?

ESRC provide guidance on projects which are more than minimal risk (see page 8-10, of the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics, updated Jan 2015](#)); however, Departments/Schools/Faculties may wish to elaborate on this (for example, where specific types of studies are run, there may be known risks, and associated protocols, that should be applied, e.g. when working in primary or secondary schools, or working with simulators). The level of risk may be indicated via a checklist used in an ethical review submission.

7) I'd like my students to collect some data as part of a taught module or student project. What should I do?

If all students are following the same protocols then it is good practice to submit a proposal to the ethics committee that outlines that standard protocol. Once this protocol has been approved you are then responsible for communicating that to the students and ensuring that they comply with it.

8) How will students or staff know whether their work requires ethical review?

We encourage Schools/Department/Faculties to clarify their guidance to students and staff. For example, it may be appropriate to include a statement in the student handbook clarifying that ethical approval will be needed for all research involving human participants or their data. For more information on the definition of 'human participants', see the [Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics](#)

9) I'm conducting a teaching evaluation/audit. Does this require ethical review?

There is a distinction between audits being conducted for evaluation or as part of reflective practice and research, although anything that includes research should be subject to ethical review. A useful guidance leaflet has been produced by the then National Research Ethics Service (NRES) which aims to aid researchers and committees in deciding on this distinction: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/documents/2013/09/defining-research.pdf>

10) How many people should review each ethics application?

ESRC defines minimal risk according to a number of different factors, and suggests that for any project that is above minimal risk, all committee members should participate in a review. Our experience of working with committees across the University suggests that as a minimum, all applications should be reviewed by at least two people, and neither of these people should be directly involved in the research under consideration. Many committees include a checklist that indicates different potential elements of a proposal that may involve risk (e.g. if participants on the project are children); if any of the boxes on the checklist are ticked, then the proposal is likely to need a more detailed review and additional information regarding procedures or protocols to be provided.

11) I'm part of a project that involves more than one school – which committee should review the project?

Normally, the project needs only to be reviewed once, and should be reviewed by the committee associated with the lead investigator of the piece of work. However, in some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to use a particular committee due to the specific expertise of the committee members. It is important that a committee is not selected for reasons such as speed of review process – relevance and expertise of the committee are the most important determinants of the appropriate committee. If a project is multidisciplinary it is good practice for a copy of the approved proposal to be lodged in all participating Schools or Departments.

12) Do ethics committees need to have regular face-to-face meetings?

Committees should meet face-to-face at least once a year, but reviews can be conducted via electronic communications. It is sometimes useful to discuss a "tricky case" face to face, and new committees may find it useful to meet more frequently to build and share expertise and increase understanding of the types of cases that are being considered by the ethics committee.

13) We have an application where we are not sure what advice to give – what should we do?

The first thing to do is to discuss the issues with colleagues and, if appropriate, the research proposer – the aim of an ethical review is to ensure that research is conducted safely and appropriately, rather than to limit research activity, so if at all possible a solution that satisfies the researcher's aims along with complying with ethical requirements should be found. You may also wish to discuss ethical issues with other ethics officers from across the University to gain informal support and advice.

14) Does the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) ever have to make judgement on proposals?

The University Committee is, by and large, not a proposal-reviewing Committee. It has received requests for advice and guidance but School/Department proposals should be reviewed by the local committee and the only time the University Committee should be involved is as the final arbiter for complaints or appeals.

15) What is the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review body and how does it fit into the University Research Ethics Committee structure?

The University of Nottingham's Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) provides advice on the application of the 3Rs of reduction, refinement and replacement of animals in research, matters relating to the welfare and care of animals, management and operational processes within facilities and the suitability of project

proposals and subsequent review. AWERB has a representative on the University Research Ethics Committee and provides updates at each meeting, with an annual report at the October meeting. This ensures that, whilst the AWERB has its own, largely legislative remit, it is integrated within the University's governance structures and reporting to Senate via the UREC.

16) What do I do if my research involves animals?

Researchers working with animals at the University of Nottingham must meet the high ethical standards and adhere to strict legislation that safeguards animal welfare in the UK. The Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 regulates the use of protected animals in any experimental or other scientific procedure which may cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm to the animal. **Please note** that protected animals under the Act are any living vertebrates other than man and any living cephalopod. The Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body should be notified of all planned research involving protected animals to be undertaken by, or on behalf of, University staff either at this establishment or at an alternative site (including sites outside the UK). The AWERB will then need to provide approval prior to either submission of a formal Home Office project licence application or before any work not covered by the Animals (Scientific Procedure) Act 1986 can commence. If your research will involve animals you should therefore contact the AWERB to discuss what approvals are required as part of the ethical approval procedure.

17) How is research on human tissue dealt with?

The collection, storage, display and use of human tissues, whether in a research capacity or otherwise, is subject to the Human Tissue Act, 2004. The storage of human tissue for research purposes requires a licence from the Human Tissue Authority (unless the storage is an end-user exemption – contact the Research Governance team for advice). The University has an HTA licence, holder Dr William Dunn. Tissue collections must be registered under this licence – please contact the [Human Tissue Management Group](#) for advice.

18) What do I do if my research involves NHS patients, investigational medicinal products (IMPs) or NHS staff? How do I get approval?

If your research involves NHS patients or the use of an investigational medicinal product or medical device then the ethical review required is that of a Health Research Authority REC along with NHS Trust approvals. If your research involves only NHS staff or facilities then you will require NHS approval only, along with an ethical opinion from an in-house (School) REC. Applications for the HRA REC and NHS approvals are coordinated via the Research Governance team and they carry out a full sponsor review before the application is submitted. Full details for the Research governance team are on [workspace](#) or you can email sponsor@nottingham.ac.uk. If your research does not involve any of the above then you should use standard school ethical review processes.

19) My work involves interaction with the National Probation Service – what ethical route do I use?

Any work with probation service goes through Research Governance team. For guidance access the [Research Governance webpages](#) or contact sponsor@nottingham.ac.uk.

20) How do we deal with the ethical aspects of University of Nottingham research conducted outside of the UK?

All research must go through the normal School/Department/Faculty ethical review processes which, for any international research, must take into account any local ethical expectations and legal requirement, and this may result in protocols that are worded differently from those normally applied in the UK. In many cases you or your collaborators will be required to submit an additional application for ethical review in the country in which the research is being conducted. The University's [Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics](#) extends to all staff and students regardless of where the research is conducted.

21) How does the University ensure that researchers are protected when conducting research in any 'risky' space/location?

The University has a policy on lone-working conditions (see: [Lone-working](#)). An ethical review must seek to minimise any risks to the researchers associated with the research. In terms of insurance, the University has overseas and worldwide public liability cover and this provides indemnity for losses incurred as part of the university business to either the employee or a third party. Researchers should be aware of the University risk assessment requirements (see [Guidance: Risk Assessment](#))

22) My student/member of staff wants to undertake research abroad – what should I do?

Undertaking research abroad can pose many potential problems for researchers because of different legal and regulatory systems and cultural mores. As such, we have developed guidance on conducting research overseas, which can be accessed on the [Research Ethics Workspace](#). This also contains a flow chart outlining the processes for ensuring researchers are insured when conducting research abroad.

23) I have a student that wants to undertake research/data collection in their home country, what approvals do they need for this?

Some students will have good contacts in their home countries and may wish to undertake research and data collection there. In many cases this may be in holiday periods. From an ethical point of view, it's important to ensure that the research they are conducting meets all required ethical standards – informed consent, data protection, etc. From an insurance/risk assessment point of view, there are two key elements to consider. Firstly, whether the University's travel insurance would respond, and in most cases where the traveller is going home they wouldn't be covered by the University's insurance because they are paying for their own travel. Secondly, is the liability coverage for the student undertaking research, and you would need to discuss with the insurance team to ensure that they are aware of the work and can arrange cover if required. Insurance have developed a simple [flow chart](#) to help with these decisions. Use the flow chart to check the correct action to take, and if in doubt contact the insurance team for guidance.

24) What does informed consent mean?

The ESRC framework for research ethics defines informed consent as giving sufficient information about the research and ensuring that there is no explicit or implicit coercion so that prospective participants can make an informed and free decision on their possible involvement. Participants have the right to withdraw consent as well as the right not to answer particular questions. Information should be provided in a form that is comprehensible and accessible to participants, typically in written form (or in a form that participants can access after the end of the research interaction), and time should be allowed for the participants to consider their choices and to discuss their decision with others if appropriate. The consent forms should be signed off by the research participants to indicate consent. Particular care needs to be taken with participants in potentially vulnerable or dependent positions (e.g. children), in ensuring that they have the time and opportunity to access support in their decision-making and it is good practice to secure permission from a responsible adult in addition to child consent.

25) Do you always have to have informed consent in writing?

Best practice is get signed consent from participants. However, depending on the type of data collection this can be difficult. For example where participants aren't literate verbal consent may be obtained, but should where possible include a recorded written witness sign-off. Where consent is not to be secured, a full statement justifying this should be submitted to the REC for review.

26) What does 'sensitive data' mean?

'Sensitive personal data' is defined in the Data Protection Act 1998. Full details and links are provided in section 4.3 of the [Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics](#). Researchers need to also be mindful that sensitive data could also include security sensitive materials which may come under the provisions of the Counter Terrorism Act 2015, for example research on terrorism and extremist websites.

27) What do I do if the research involves looking at extremist websites or security sensitive materials?

Research involving extremist websites or security sensitive materials should, under the existing ethical review process, be flagged as more than minimal risk and put through full ethical review. The review would then assess whether there is a valid reason for accessing this information for research purposes, and if it is necessary for the research project. The REC should also be considering the potentially radicalising effects of viewing materials of this type in deciding whether to approve the project. The aim is to support academics and students who wish to undertake research utilising security sensitive materials, and protect them from misinterpretation of intent by authorities (which may result in legal sanction). The bottom line is that to ensure the University can protect researchers it must be aware of the research before it begins, and the ethical review process gives the University the ability to ensure proper data governance and oversight.

28) My department doesn't have anything to do with human participants – why is research ethics relevant to me?

This may be true at the moment but research is ever changing and there still need to be processes in place to ensure that basic checks are undertaken. Schools do not have to have their own ethics committee but they should have a clear process for to ensure that projects needing light touch or full review are identified and passed to another school ethics committee to carry out this review.

29) How do I know if the research requires a DBS check, where do I get one and who pays?

A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be required if the research involves children or vulnerable adults. The [DfE guidelines](#) on regulated activity outline the threshold of when a DBS check is required, but generally much depends on whether the access to the students or vulnerable group will be supervised, and this needs to be looked at on a case by case basis. The DBS guidance can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance>. The University can undertake, and pay for, DBS checks for staff, and you would need to contact your HR business partner in the first instance for further guidance. For students, the majority of DBS checks are carried out by the Widening Participation team, but this is primarily for students acting as volunteers in University-related activities which benefit the organisations taking part. Much depends on their school (e.g. school of education have standard procedures) and the organisation the student is visiting.

30) What is the disciplinary procedure if ethical approval isn't obtained? What does it mean for my project?

In the first instance, the project (or data collection) should be stopped while ethical approval is sought. The lack of ethical approval would fall under academic misconduct and would follow standard procedures for dealing with this, as outlined in the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics. For students, this is covered in the [Quality Manual policy](#) on Academic Misconduct, which specifically refers to lack of ethics approval (2.1.6). For staff, this would be dealt with under disciplinary procedures and would need to follow the following [guidelines](#). Whether this is dealt with informally or formally depends on the case and the nature of the issue. If funders are involved then this would need to be looked at as part of the overall procedure for dealing with misconduct. The key implication for a research project is that the data cannot be used in the research if it has not been through ethical review.

31) Can retrospective ethical approval be given?

No – retrospective ethical approval is never provided – either for staff or students. The data cannot be used in the research if it has not been through ethical review.

32) What do I do if my project involves multiple institutions?

The basic principle is that for research involving multi-institutions each individual researcher needs to obtain approval from their institution. In some cases, some universities may want to know/see what the other institutions have approved.

33) What's the difference between research ethics and integrity?

Research integrity can be seen as the overarching principles governing our research. Research ethics is a subset of this, highlighted as one of the key points in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, July 2012), where it refers to 'ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

34) Is it ok to do covert research?

It is recognised that there are occasions when the use of covert research methods is necessary and justifiable and consent may need to be managed at a point beyond the completion of research fieldwork. However, this would require full justification and would be deemed more than minimal risk, requiring full review by a REC.

35) What information is needed for a proposal for an ethics committee?

There are a number of examples of forms already in use around the university on our website (see the Research Ethics Workspace). The aim of your proposal is to provide enough information for the committee to be able to assess whether your research has addressed the ethical issues and you have managed the associated risks. Each local committee should have a set of forms that are used for all submissions to that committee.

36) What are the possible outcomes of an ethical review?

The possible outcomes are: applications may be approved immediately or applications are approved subject to further information and/or amendment. In some cases there may be a period of discussion between the committee and the researcher to ensure that the ethical issues are addressed whilst still meeting the overall aims of the research. Rarely, proposals could be rejected outright. Ethical review is not intended to inhibit good quality research.

37) What does it mean when a funder requests institutional approval?

This means School/Department/Faculty review.

38) The processes and procedures appear to be a bureaucratic nightmare! I'm tempted to change my research to avoid the complexities of ethical review.

Please do not be put off by the process as it is often simpler than you think it is going to be. The intention of all reviews and the associated paperwork is to make people aware of and reflect upon the ethical issues associated with their research. We do not want people to be afraid of pushing boundaries in their research; the ethical review process is intended to be a constructive mechanism to support research of all types and to maintain and

elevate standards. Funding and the publication of research often depends on the appropriate ethical procedures having been followed. There is a wide network of support available – please see the Research Ethics Workspace)

Updated January 2016.

If you have any questions or queries relating to the information in this document, please contact the secretary to the University's Research Ethics committee, Catherine Jew: Catherine.Jew@nottingham.ac.uk