

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE
WEST *of* SCOTLAND

**School of Health and Life
Sciences**

**Research and Scholarship Ethics
Guidelines**

Named Contact

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Introduction

The School Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee (SAIEC) is constituted under the University Senate committees (<https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/governance/#committees>). The current membership of the SAIEC is listed on the committee Moodle site ([Course: HLS Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee Information \(uws.ac.uk\)](#))(self-enrolment code: HLEthics).

Consideration of the potential ethical implications/issues associated with research or scholarship is an essential first step in planning our activities in this area. The University Academic Integrity & Ethics Committee (UAIEC) has established guidelines for ethical practice in research and scholarship which can be viewed and downloaded from the *Research* section of our *Policies, Procedures and Guidance* webpage:

<https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/#research>

All staff and students must consider the potential ethical implications of their research and scholarship activities. The criteria below and flowchart at the end of these guidelines will help you to decide if formal ethical approval is required for your research/scholarship.

The university guidelines state that research and scholarship involving animals, human participants, personal data or risk to the investigator not adequately controlled by proper application of school/university health and safety policies/procedures requires independent ethical scrutiny. The School of Health and Life Sciences requires that risk to the investigator is considered and eliminated, or at least minimised, during the health and safety risk-assessments for the proposed work.

Animals

Research or scholarship involving captive or temporarily captive living vertebrates or cephalopods requires ethical scrutiny. For work on such animals regulated under the terms of the Animals (Scientific procedures) Act, 1986 (ASPA) (<https://www.gov.uk/research-and-testing-using-animals>), this ethical approval should be obtained from the University Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB). For work on such animals not regulated under the terms of ASPA, ethical approval should be obtained from the School Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee (see *Procedure for applying for ethical approval of research and scholarship* section, over, for details).

Research involving animals which does not fall into the above categories, e.g., observational studies of wild animals should be assessed, and any animal welfare considerations involved in this should be considered and eliminated or minimised during the fieldwork risk-assessment for the work. The [UWS Fieldwork Procedure](#) can be viewed and downloaded from the *Health and Safety* section of our *Policies, Procedures and Guidance* webpage: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/#HealthSafety>.

Human participants

All research and scholarship involving human participants (other than the investigator(s)) or personal data¹ must have **prior** approval from the school ethics committee. The SAIEC **will not** grant retrospective approval to any study.

¹Applicants are reminded of the need to comply with the university's GDPR regulations including the possible need for a privacy impact assessment ([UWS Data Protection Code of Practice](#)).

Research or scholarship involving personal data may not always require ethical approval, e.g., where the data being used is already in the public domain. The SAIEC is happy to provide advice on whether proposed research or scholarship requires a full application to the committee (healthandlifesciencesethics@uws.ac.uk).

Data collection and storage

The SAIEC expects researchers to use their UWS approved systems, such as Microsoft OneDrive, Microsoft Teams and Question Pro² to collect, record and store project data wherever possible. If researchers need to use other systems for the collection or storage of project data, a case for doing so may be made in the project application. In all instances, you are recommended to consult with and follow the advice from the IT department, particularly with regards to the acquisition and storage of sensitive information.

Procedure for applying for ethical approval of research and scholarship

1. The investigator(s) should complete the online application form (<https://uws.forms.ethicalreviewmanager.com>). Training materials to help with completion of the form are available on the following Moodle site ([ERM - Applicant User Guide1.pdf \(uws.ac.uk\)](#)) and in the application form itself. Where the investigator is a student, the application should be reviewed and approved by the student's supervisor/director of studies and signed by both parties to confirm that this process has taken place. Staff applicants should ask colleagues within their research institute to peer-review their application prior to submission.
2. The application and supporting documents (e.g., participant information sheet, copies of any questionnaires, letters of invitation, advertising etc., that the investigator is proposing to use) are submitted via the online system. Applicants should note that once an application is submitted it cannot be altered/amended or added to until after the review process, so please ensure that you have supplied the "final"/correct version of all documents before submitting. Where the investigator feels that the work or procedures to be used are complex or of a highly technical nature, they may suggest a reviewer to the committee (healthandlifesciencesethics@uws.ac.uk). This suggested reviewer must have no part in the proposed work nor can they have any formal relationship with any of the investigators (e.g., supervisor, line manager/line managed by the investigator(s)).
3. The ethics committee will send the application out for independent review. The number of reviewers (1 or 2) will depend on the likely risk associated with the proposal. "Higher-risk" or complex applications will be assessed by two independent school reviewers before being sent to the university ethics committee (UEC) for a further opinion. The UAIEC ethics guidelines, [Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Research and Scholarship](#) provides information on what might constitute "higher risk" proposals; this document can be viewed and downloaded from the *Research* section of our *Policies, Procedures and Guidance* webpage: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/policies-procedures-guidance/#research>. Applicants proposing to carry out such work can and should use their application to explain the measures they have put in place to mitigate the risk.
4. In the case of projects that involve the NHS (either, staff, patients, or facilities) then the ethics applicant must first visit the Healthcare Research Authority website "Is my project research?" (<https://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/>). The NHS has specific criteria for what they consider as being research. The online decision tool will result in either:

² Work is underway within the University to update the guidance in relation to the acquisition and secure storage of research data. Check with the Chair of the School's SAIEC for more information and guidance.

- a. Your project being considered research as per the NHS definition – please submit an ethics application directly to the NHS via IRAS (<https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/>). You **do not** need to submit a separate ethics application to the school ethics committee.
- b. Your project not being considered research as per the NHS definition – you **MUST** submit an application to the school ethics committee.

If you are a student applicant, then please work with your supervisory team to prepare the necessary documentation.

Whether the route you take regarding ethics approval is a) or b) you may have additional documentation to complete. It is strongly recommended that you contact the NHS Research and Development Department(s) of the NHS boards where your research is to be undertaken to discuss any further regulatory/approval requirements.

5. The committee will endeavour to assess applications within 20 working days, but complex applications may take longer (particularly where the opinion of the UAIEC or other external body is required). Applicants should factor these timelines into their research planning. Where the committee needs to send an application back to the author(s) for further work/information the 30-day timescale will apply from the date of resubmission by the applicant.
6. The reviewers will assess the application and will give a recommendation to the committee as follows:
 - **Approved:** the project can proceed
 - **Approved with conditions:** the project can proceed provided the compulsory changes are made or requirements met
 - **Not approved:** the project cannot proceed for the reasons clearly specified
 - **No decision:** the project requires further clarification or further review
7. The committee will communicate the outcome of the review to the applicant. Where “No decision” has been reached the applicant should address the comments/feedback provided and resubmit the proposal. Where the decision involves “conditions” the applicant or, in the case of a student, their supervisor/director of studies should inform the committee chair that the conditions have been met prior to the commencement of the work.

Once approval has been given for a study, applicants are reminded that it must be carried out in accordance with the application submitted and in compliance with any conditions of approval. Any modifications to the study must be notified to the school ethics committee immediately and before they are implemented. This can be done by submitting an amendment request to the approved study on the online system (<https://uws.forms.ethicalreviewmanager.com>).

8. The applicant may appeal the decision of the school ethics committee to the university academic integrity and ethics committee, if the applicant can demonstrate that the evidence was not fully and properly considered in relation to the ‘risk’ the project poses. If you wish to lodge an appeal, you should complete an appeal form on the online system (<https://uws.forms.ethicalreviewmanager.com>).

Oversight of research

In addition to being charged with scrutinising and approving applications for research or scholarship the school ethics committee is also responsible for oversight of the research being carried out. To facilitate this role the school ethics committee requires applicants to report back to the committee at the conclusion of the research project or 1 year after approval (whichever is the sooner) on the outcome/progress of the work. In the case of UG and PG projects this is fulfilled by the submission of the student's dissertation/thesis. In the case of staff applications, the committee requires a report describing the conduct of the research and reflecting on how it had been carried out and any issues which had arisen. A form for such reports is available on the ethics committee Moodle site ([Course: HLS Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee Information \(uws.ac.uk\)](#)). If your project has been approved by an external ethics committee you may submit a copy of the reports to these committees to the SAIEC.

Is ethical approval required for my work? Where should I go to get it?

