

# Project Ethics and the Application Process

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Hello

## Ethics

## Ethics (1)

What are ethics?

- Provides researchers with ethical guidelines and principles for the conduct of their research
- Ethics, broadly defined, is the *morality* of human action
  - the rightness or wrongness
- Concerned with what is good for the people and society as a whole
- In research, we are concerned with not causing harm to participants

## Ethics (2)

### The Need for Ethical Approval

- Approval is needed when undertaking the following:
  - research, design studies, product development
  - survey work, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or case studies
- Most important if doing the following:
  - active participation from humans (fellow students, friends, parents etc.)
  - actual or potential disclosure and storage of personal (or confidential) information

## Data Collection

## Data Collection and Management (1)

### Primary Research

- Primary research is collected by a researcher from first-hand sources
  - i.e. methods such as interviews, questionnaires, surveys, experiments or observations
- This type of research often needs information regarding:
  - how consent would be obtained
  - what are the potential physical and emotional risks to the researcher(s) and/or participant(s)?
  - how will the data be gathered, stored, used and destroyed

## Data Collection and Management (2)

### Seeking Consent

- Explain your project clearly to participants
- Informed consent must be sought before any data is collected
- Participants must be fully informed, this includes:
  - the purpose, methods and data that will be collected and why
  - what participation entails and what risks it may involve
  - how the participant can withdraw from the study
- Consent must be provided **freely**, they must decide without coercion
- Consent is a **process**
  - it is not just a signature on a form
  - it is an iterative process where information is shared, and concerns are addressed
- Important documents you need:
  - [Participant Information Sheet - Template](#)
  - [Participant Information Sheet - Guidance](#)

## Data Collection and Management (3)

### Withdrawal of Participation

- You must clearly state to participants that they have the right to withdraw
  - they can do so without providing a reason and without any repercussion
- Withdrawal is often split into two methods:
  - withdrawal of self
  - withdrawal of data
- When data is archived or stored, it can potentially affect the withdrawal of the data
- Specific consent must be obtained if data is going to be kept longer than necessary

### Withdrawal of Self

- Participants refuse to answer particular questions
- They refuse to participate in a particular aspect of the study
- Or, end all forms of participation midway through the study

### Withdrawal of Data

- Participants should be able to withdraw their data
  - this can be done to the point where you cannot reasonably exclude it
- This moment of withdrawal can be different for each project

## Data Collection and Management (4)

### Online Surveys

- There is a single approved site for survey data collection, [Online Surveys](#)
- If you require an account, contact IT Services:
  - telephone: 02477 657 777
  - or visit them at the library on the ground-floor
- You **cannot** use Survey Monkey, Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, etc.
  - if you want to use alternative survey software, you need to get approval via the [Information Governance Unit](#)

## Data Collection and Management (5)

### Participants of Surveying

- The ethics application should include information about participant sample and recruitment
- You should consider the following when writing the consent document:
  - potential conflicts of interest
  - whether the participant has the capacity to provide consent
  - how is the information presented in the participant information sheet?
  - how is consent being obtained? consider the language — is it clear to the reader?
- If you cannot get written consent, alternative forms of consent must be evidenced

## Data Collection and Management (6)

### Risk and Harm

- Highlight any risk or harm to the researcher(s) and participant(s)
- Provide details on how you will minimise and manage it
- Harm could be something relatively low in impact, but likely to happen
  - it could also be less likely to happen, but have a major impact
- Harm is considered to be:
  - *personal* and *physical* safety
  - *psychological* and *emotional*
- It can come from several areas
  - i.e. handling and storage of materials, travel and remote working, personal data collection, etc.

## Data Collection and Management (7)

### Anonymity and Confidentiality

- Anonymity is concerned with making the data anonymous
  - achieved by removing the contributor name and any other identifiers
- Confidentiality is concerned with:
  - the protection of the data collected, this is during the research project and after
  - ensuring that those who have access to the data maintain confidentiality
    - i.e. not discussing issues which may identify an individual, or disclosing any information an individual may have said
- There may be a likelihood that confidentiality is broken
  - must be for a good reason and explained prior to any data collection
  - prior explanation can be given in the [Participant Information Sheet](#)

## Data Collection and Management and Management (8)

Why is data management required?

- Before applying for ethical approval, consider the data management during and after the collection period
- Be mindful of the data policies for retention
- Describe your data management and storage protocol in your application
- Consider where you shall be storing the data:
  - **electronic data:** Coventry University Microsoft OneDrive account
  - **paper data:** consider somewhere that is secure and cannot be accessed by other people
- If you plan to share the data with other people, you need to make this clear in your ethics application
  - also make it clear in any participant documentation, i.e. the [Participant Information Sheet](#)
- Consent forms from participants must be kept secure and separate from the research data
  - [View the policy document](#) for more information

## Ethics Application

## Ethics Application (1)

### Level of Risk

#### Low Risk

- Often purely secondary research
  - i.e. analysis of published data
- Literature-based reviews, systematic reviews, critical and service evaluations
- Desk-based research where critical analysis is the principal method of research
- Projects that use publicly available statistics

#### High Risk

- Often primary research
- Research with a high impact of risk
- Sensitive research, whether *primary* or *secondary*
- Submitting for ethical approval **outside** the university
- Work with vulnerable samples with additional risks involved

#### Medium Risk

- Often primary research
  - i.e. collecting data from human participants via surveys, questionnaires, observations etc

## Ethics Application (2)

### Common Issues and Mistakes

- Lack of detailed explanation on how ethical issues will be addressed in the research
- Lack of information regarding any risk assessments and health and safety
- Missing documentation
  - i.e. questionnaire, interview guides, participant information sheet and consent forms etc.
- Incomplete applications or missing relevant sections
- Inconsistent information in the application and supporting documents

## Ethics Application (3)

### Post-Ethics Approval

- Follow the procedures outlined in your ethics application
- Use only the documents you have approval for and that were included in your application
  - i.e. participant information sheet, questionnaires, consent forms etc.
- Follow your data management plan
- **Failure to comply with the above will be subject to ethical misconduct**

### Amendments to your Ethics

- Amendments must be submitted if the research project develops beyond the scope of the original application
- An amendment must be in place and approved before any of the changes can be implemented
- Contact the EEC Ethics team for the local amendment process:
  - E-Mail: [ethics.eec@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ethics.eec@coventry.ac.uk)

Goodbye

## Goodbye (1)

### Questions and Support

- Questions? Post them in the **Community Page** on Aula
- Additional Support? Visit the [Module Support Page](#)
- Contact Details:
  - Dr Ian Cornelius, [ab6459@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ab6459@coventry.ac.uk)
  - Mr Terry Richards, [ac6860@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ac6860@coventry.ac.uk)