

School of English & Digital Humanities: Guidelines for Ethics Approval for Student Research

All staff and students within the School of English & Digital Humanities should read this document IN FULL before seeking ethics approval for student research projects. Approval guidelines for undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as their supervisors, are detailed as in their relevant sections.

General Overview of Ethics Approval

Ethics approval exists so as to ensure good research conduct among staff and students at UCC. Staff and students should familiarise themselves with UCC's Code of Research Conduct:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/policiesdocuments/UCCCodeofResearchConductV2.2FINAL141218.pdf>

Ethics approval must ALWAYS be obtained IN ADVANCE of carrying out the research and ethics approval cannot be granted retrospectively.

The overall coordination of research ethics is the responsibility of the University Ethics Committee (UEC), a committee of Academic Council which reports annually to Academic Council and Governing Body.

For more information on research ethics at the university level, see:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/>

There are three separate committees at UCC dealing with ethics approval:

1. Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC)
2. Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee (AEEC)
3. Research Ethics Committee of the Cork Teaching Hospitals (CREC)

Research in the arts and humanities generally falls under the remit of the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC).

When is ethics approval required?

Research ethics approval is required for all research involving DIRECT and INDIRECT interaction with human participants. This includes interaction via computer, the internet, in clinical or other settings, and/or any research which uses personal data of identifiable individuals. Only when a student has obtained approval for their research can they start that part of the research which involves people. Ethics approval is also required for any research which involves the use of animals.

Undergraduate Research

The university-level Social Research Ethics Committee DOES NOT review ethical applications from undergraduate students or non-UCC applicants. In the case of ALL undergraduate research, the following application should be completed by students in conjunction with their project supervisors:

https://uccireland-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/james_osullivan_ucc_ie/EQ6Zfloc7KJCqLRVag5W0gABwXPR5cDcrT8ezbbc44DmVA

Once completed, this form should then be returned by the supervisor to their departmental Research Officer for approval. Research officers will then discuss the application with the supervisors, who will agree on any measures that should be taken by the student before ethics approval is granted. Where a student is supervised by the departmental research officer, the supervisor must choose another member of faculty for the purposes of consultation. ALL proposals MUST be considered by AT LEAST TWO members of the relevant department's faculty.

Undergraduate research should NEVER be referred to the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC). Should the supervisor and research officer feel that the research is of a particularly-sensitive nature, they should advise the student to adjust their topic accordingly. Typically, undergraduate students in the School of English and Digital Humanities should refrain from research projects which involve interaction with vulnerable groups, persons under the age of 18, animals or clinical settings.

The following guidelines can be used to determine what constitutes a vulnerable group:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/ethicswebpage/VulnerabilityGuidanceDocumentApril2019.pdf>

Postgraduate Research

Generally, the university-level Social Research Ethics Committee DOES NOT review ethical applications from postgraduate students. In the first instance, the following application should be completed by students in conjunction with their project supervisors:

https://uccireland-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/james_osullivan_ucc_ie/EQ6Zfloc7KJCqLRVag5W0gABwXPR5cDcrT8ezbbc44DmVA

Once completed, this form should then be returned by the supervisor to their departmental Research Officer for approval. Research officers will then discuss the application with the supervisors, who will agree on any measures that should be taken by the student before ethics approval is granted. Where a student is supervised by the departmental research officer, the supervisor must choose another member of faculty for the purposes of consultation. ALL proposals MUST be considered by AT LEAST TWO members of the relevant department's faculty. Ethics approval forms and feedback should be stored by supervisors and research officers in the event that they are required at a later date.

In exceptional cases where the supervisor and research officer are uncomfortable granting departmental approval, they may agree to refer the proposal to the

Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC). In such cases, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/socialresearch/>

Consent Forms & Further Resources

Should students require consent forms or further guidelines relating to ethical research, they should be referred to official Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) resources:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/socialresearch/>

Research Officers

Departmental research officers within the School of English & Digital Humanities are as follows:

Dr Ciona Ó Galloir (Department of English)

Dr Maureen O'Connor (Department of English)

Dr James O'Sullivan (Department of Digital Humanities)