Trinity College Dublin
School of Education

Application for Ethical Approval of
Staff Research Proposals 2015/16

Notes for Staff and Students prior to completing application form:

1. The University requires all research activity involving people as participants to be subjected to ethical scrutiny and this form is designed to enable the School of Education’s Research Ethics Committee (REC) to assess any research proposed by members of staff or students.

2. You must state whether you require ethical approval at Level 0, Level 1 or Level 2.

Level 0 ethical approval

If your research does not involve human (or animal) participants for example:

1. Quality assurance studies (e.g. assessment of teaching practice records)
2. Audits of standard practice (not involving identifiable records)
3. Research on publicly available information, documents or data sets

your research work would constitute a Level 0.

Please state this clearly on the form and complete question 1 only along with your personal details as well as the necessary signatures. Students please note, you need to have this form signed by your supervisor.

Level 1 ethical approval

This is no risk to relatively low risk research – i.e. research carrying little or no risks or discomfort greater than usually encountered during normal daily life, for example:

1. Anonymous surveys of a non-intrusive personal nature.
2. Unrecorded and anonymous observation of individuals in public areas.
3. Analysis of irrevocably anonymised and appropriately collected data.
4. Interviews (consensual) with non-vulnerable adults.
5. Action research (Research initiated to solve an immediate problem or a reflective process of progressive problem solving conducted either by individuals on their own practice or by individuals working with other in teams or as part of a “community of practice” to improve the way they address issues and solve problems [participatory action research]).
6. Surveys where respondents can be identified and where respondents
Level 2 ethical approval

**Moderate to high-risk** research (i.e. risk or discomfort is greater than that usually encountered during normal daily life) this includes ALL RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN (i.e. under 18 years of age).

**MODERATE RISK**

1. Surveys asking questions of a sensitive or private nature
2. Questionnaires or observational studies involving children or vulnerable adults.
3. Research where there is a risk of a participant feeling undue pressure to participate by virtue of his/her relationship with the researcher (e.g. student/supervisor; teacher/student).
4. Projects involving a justifiable degree of deception.

**HIGH RISK**

5. Research involving children and vulnerable adults.
6. Research where identifiable information obtained may have legal, economic or social consequences for research subjects.
7. Research that may identify illegal activity.
8. Projects where each subject is paid (over and above token gestures).
9. Research that may potentially endanger the subjects, and/or researchers, and/or 3rd parties, and/or the environment.
10. Research that may have a direct military role.
11. Research conducted outside Ireland.
13. Research where a potentially beneficial or harmful treatment, information or learning method may be withheld from some participants.

**Additional notes**

i. In situations where research ethics approval has been granted by an appropriate research ethics committee elsewhere, the submission may qualify for fast-tracked approval processing in TCD.
ii. Unless otherwise noted, research involving adults assumes adults with a capacity to consent.
iii. Vulnerable groups/persons are described as:
   • individuals who face excessive risk of being enrolled in research, including those with limitations in their ability to provide informed consent to research because of factors such as immaturity or cognitive impairment.
   • vulnerability can also stem from individuals’ relationships with others, and it is imperative that coercive situations are avoided. Such cases may occur when an employee/student/dependent is asked to participate in
research being conducted by a supervisor/mentor.

iv. Additional social factors, such as poverty and lack of access to health care, can also make individuals vulnerable to coercion, exploitation or other risks and need to be considered in reviewing applications.

3. The primary focus for approval is research involving people. Where the participants include children or vulnerable adults, research cannot proceed unless all researchers involved have obtained Garda vetting. In principle, all research in Trinity School of Education should be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of all participants (including to privacy of data, confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate), causes no harm to participants or researchers, and requires the active, fully informed consent of all participants and their parents, carers, guardians or relevant responsible others.

4. In the case of Level 2 ethical approval applications, consent forms, must be attached to the application, and therefore demonstrate clearly that prospective participants are being fully informed about the purpose of the research and their role in it, how their data will be gathered, the purposes to which their data will be put and how their right to privacy (confidentiality and anonymity) will be respected (for research involving children, use the guidelines produced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/Ethics_Guidance.pdf).

5. Educational research undertaken outside Ireland must adhere to the same ethical standards as research Ireland. Any additional regulations (e.g. police clearance) and cultural sensitivities of the host country must also be observed.

6. Some Level 2 ethical approval applications may need to be referred to the Trinity Research Ethics Policy Committee (REPC) where proposals:
   • have the potential to cause harm to participants or researchers, directly physical or psychological;
   • may give rise to situations in which the researchers have to make statutory disclosure of illegal activity, whether on the part of participants or others;
   • seek to deceive participants for any reason;
   • may give rise to situations that may put the participants or researchers in any form of jeopardy.

7. If any changes to the approved research proposal are made:
   i. For Students: these must be discussed with your supervisor, and may require additional ethical approval;
   ii. For Staff: substantive changes need to be clarified with the REC and may require additional approval.

8. This form along with any correspondence that is undertaken as a follow-up (e.g. approval letter, request for amendments etc) will be kept as a formal record of the scrutiny process, for inspection as required by the University authorities. As such, proposers should ensure that proposals are presented to a professional standard as they will be returned for resubmission if deemed not to have been adequately prepared.

Please post a hard copy of the completed ethical approval application form, consent form(s) and a cover email requesting ethics review to the REC administrator: Ethical Approvals, Room 3088 School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, College Green, Dublin 2 Email: Phdsrcs@tcd.ie). You can also use the ‘drop box’ underneath the School of Education main notice board on the 3rd floor in the Arts Building.

In the case of student applicants, the form MUST be signed off by the supervisor prior to submission otherwise it will be returned.
Application for Ethical Approval of Academic Staff Research Proposals

Title of Research

Principal Investigator’s Name (Academic Staff)

Trinity Email Address

Please indicate the level of approval required (see accompanying notes)

Level 0 ☐ Level 1 ☐ Level 2 ☐

1. Please give a structured abstract of the proposed research, including the methods you intend to use (approx. 300 words).

2. Please answer the following questions in relation to your proposed research. Questions (b), (c) or (d) will require detailed explanations if answered ‘yes’ and will be referred for additional scrutiny by the REC or Trinity REPC. Answering ‘Yes’ to (e) will require a separate application to the relevant HSE REC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Please tick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Does the research involve work with children (under-18) or vulnerable adults?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If ‘Yes’, has appropriate Garda clearance (or equivalent) been obtained (include details)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please provide the date of issue on the Certificate.
b. Could any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher(s)?

c. Could any aspect of the research produce information that could lead to criminal prosecution of the participants or others?

d. Is deception of the participants planned in any aspect of the research? If yes, provide details.

e. Does any aspect of the research involve patients (or their relatives or carers) or other users of health and social care services, the premises or facilities of such services, access to personal records or the participation of health or social care staff?

3. (a) Who are the proposed participants, e.g. teachers; students?

(b) What is your relationship with them? (If you are in a position of authority, for example, indicate how you will deal with the potential influences of such a relationship.)

4. (a) How will you recruit them?

(b) Please detail any ethical aspects that must be considered, including the proposed use of any incentives.

5. (a) What is the location(s) at which the data collection will be undertaken?

(b) Describe any circumstances that might give rise to security concerns for participants or researchers?
(c) Describe any conflicts of interest where data might be critical of working practices, people etc. or disclosure of illegal activities?

6. Please indicate how informed consent of all participants will be gained. (Draft consent forms MUST be attached – see question 8 for guidance.)

7. (a) Please indicate how the participants’ rights to privacy (inc. confidentiality and anonymity) and the privacy of their data will be protected. Highlight potential limitations of confidentiality in the ethics form and information sheets for participants (e.g. for small samples or insider research and how this will be addressed).

(b) Please also indicate how the data will be stored (and ultimately destroyed as appropriate).

8. Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of consent.  
(Note that the consent forms that must accompany this application; any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).

| Please tick | 
|---|---|
| I have attached (an) appropriate consent form(s) which include the freedom to withdraw at any stage without having to offer a reason. |  
| Each consent form has full contact details of the researcher to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries |  

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Each consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate

Each consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes

Each consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate

Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, and that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to provide a reason

Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s)

**Has your proposal been submitted to any other Research Ethics Committee?**

- Yes [ ]
- No [ ]

**If yes, please provide details:**
Declaration by All Proposers:
I have read and understood the Trinity School of Education’s policy on ethics in educational research: [https://www.tcd.ie/Education/ethics/](https://www.tcd.ie/Education/ethics/) and the Trinity College Dublin Good Research Practice Policies:


I declare that the details above reflect accurately my research proposal and I undertake to seek updated approval if substantive changes are proposed after this submission. I have consulted an authoritative set of educational research guidelines.

Academic Staff Signature:

Signed:  
Date:

In instances where supervisors feel that their specialised expertise may be important information for the REC to take into account (e.g. in relation in researching highly sensitive areas such as trauma/abuse), please submit an additional page with any relevant information.

Final Approval Signed-Off by a member of the Research Ethics Committee

Signed:  
Date:

Name of member (in block letters): ____________________________________________