Application for Ethical Approval of

Notes for Staff and Students prior to completing the application form:

1. The University requires all research activity 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. Please state whether you require ethical approval at Level 0, Level 1 or Level 2.

Level 0 ethical approval

For example, your research activity is classified as Level 0 if your research does not involve human (or animal) participants. Here are some examples:

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

If applying for approval at Level 0, please indicate this clearly on the form. Level 0 approval requires the applicant to complete the personal details section, Section 1, and to include the necessary signatures. Students, please note that all applications require a supervisor signature.

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 others 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 have given appropriate consent.
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) and VULNERABLE ADULTS (i.e. participants with an intellectual disability).

**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**

1. 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.  
2. Unless otherwise noted, research involving adults assumes adults with a capacity to consent. 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.  
3. 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.  
4. 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.

5. In the case of Level 1 and Level 2 ethical approval applications, information sheets and consent forms must be attached to the application in relation to participants and their parents/guardians and principals, as applicable. It should therefore be demonstrated 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 used 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](http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/Ethics_Guidance.pdf).

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

   **In the case of student applicants, the form MUST be signed off by the supervisor prior to submission otherwise it will be returned.**

**Two copies** of this ethics form must be submitted:

A. A hard copy with ORIGINAL SIGNATURES and information sheets/consent forms must be submitted to the REC administrator: Ethical Approvals, Room 3087 School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, College Green, Dublin 2

B. An electronic copy (does not require signatures) and information sheets/consent forms must also be emailed to Phdsrc@tcd.ie.

Final ethical approval will be granted ONLY when you are issued with a letter from the Research Ethics Committee.

No data collection is approved until this letter has been received.

For student applications, this letter is included as an appendix in the final thesis submission.