

**School of Applied Social Studies**

Research Ethics Form For Undergraduate and taught Postgraduate research projects.

**Introduction**

In UCC, research ethics is the remit of the University Ethics Committee (UEC). There are three ethics subcommittees under the remit of UEC, one of which is the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC). This committee (SREC) reviews research proposals submitted by university staff and research-based postgraduate students seeking ethical approval for social research (as distinct from clinical research or research involving animal experimentation). The work of SREC is strongly informed by the UCC Code of Research Conduct (2021).

See: [UCC Code of Research Conduct](https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/integrity/researchintegritypoliciesguidance/ucccodeofresearchconduct/)

UEC and SREC seek to ensure that supervisors and researchers are sufficiently supported to undertake research (which may involve human participants) to the highest possible standards and with due regard to the welfare of all concerned.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students (i.e. BSocSc, BSW, BYCW, MSocSc, MSW, HDip) should discuss the ethical implications of what research they are proposing to do with their supervisors and complete this research ethics form for their supervisor prior to any research being conducted involving human subjects in both direct and indirect ways (e.g. online research, individuals’ records, online surveys). This form should be included as an appendix in the submitted research report, in addition to copies of information sheets, consent forms used, and the research instruments (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule). It is strongly advised that all students adhere to the guidance on ethical issues provided by their supervisors and consult with supervisors should unanticipated ethical issues arise. Students should ensure that all forms being used to recruit, inform, and gain the consent of research subjects as well as the research instruments (e.g. focus group interview schedule/ questionnaire) being used have been reviewed by supervisors prior to conducting any primary research/ fieldwork. Students should carefully abide by any ethical guidelines for their research provided by their course teams or in their course handbooks, as well as the UCC Code of Research Conduct in their research. See:** [UCC Code of Research Conduct](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/researchsupports/researchintegrity/UCCCodeofResearchConductV2.4-approved14thSeptember2021.pdf)

Should disagreements or difficulties arise in relation to ethical issues that cannot be resolved between supervisor and student or course team and student, the assistance of members of the School of Applied Social Studies Research and Ethics Committees can be sought (e.g. Elizabeth Kiely at [e.kiely@ucc.ie](mailto:e.kiely@ucc.ie) and Orla O’Donovan at [o.odonovan@ucc.ie](mailto:o.odonovan@ucc.ie)).

**PART A: Complete this check list and discuss *with* your supervisor**

*If your answer falls into any of the shaded boxes, please address each point later on in the form.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **YES** | **NO** | **N/A** |
| 1 | Have you discussed your proposed research and your ethical review with your supervisor? |  |  |  |
| 2 | Do you consider that this project has significant ethical implications? |  |  |  |
| 3 | Will the main research procedures be outlined to potential research participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect? |  |  |  |
| 4 | Will research participation be voluntary? |  |  |  |
| 5 | Will informed consent be obtained in writing from research participants? |  |  |  |
| 6 | Will you tell research participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, and (where relevant) omit questionnaire items/ questions to which they do not wish to respond? |  |  |  |
| 7 | Will data be treated with full confidentiality/ anonymity (as appropriate)[[1]](#footnote-1)? |  |  |  |
| 8 | Will data be securely held for a minimum period of ten years after the completion of a research project, in line with the University’s *Code of Research Conduct* (2016)? |  |  |  |
| 9 | If results are published, will anonymity / pseudo-anonymity be maintained and participants not identified? |  |  |  |
| 10 | Will participants be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. will you give them a brief explanation of the study and address any concerns they may have after research participation)? |  |  |  |
| 11 | Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way? |  |  |  |
| 12 | Will research participants include children/ young persons (under 18 years of age)? |  |  |  |
| 13 | If yes to question 12, is your research informed by the UCC *Child Safeguarding Statement*, which sets out the legal requirements under the *Children First Act 2018*:[UCC Child Protection Policy 2018](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/policies/UCC_Child_Protection_Policy_5April2018-Final.pdf) |  |  |  |
| 14 | Will your project require you to carry out “relevant work” as defined in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016?[[2]](#footnote-2) |  |  |  |
| 15 | Do you require official Garda Vetting through UCC before collecting data from children or vulnerable adults? Having Garda Vetting through another body is not sufficient; UCC Garda Vetting is required. |  |  |  |
| 16 | Will research participants include people with learning or communication difficulties? |  |  |  |
| 17 | Will research participants include patients/ service users/ clients? |  |  |  |
| 18 | Will research participants include people in custody? |  |  |  |
| 19 | Will research participants include people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking, illegal Internet behaviour, crime, etc.)? |  |  |  |
| 20a | Is there a realistic risk of participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress due to research participation? |  |  |  |
| 20b | Is there a realistic risk of you, as the researcher, experiencing either physical or psychological distress? |  |  |  |
| 21 | If yes to question 20a, has a proposed procedure for linking the participants to an appropriate support, including the name of a contact person, been given? |  |  |  |
| 22 | If yes to question 20b, has a proposed procedure/support structure been identified? |  |  |  |
| 23 | Are the research participants also students with whom you have some current/previous connection (class members, friends, tutor, etc.)? |  |  |  |
| 24 | Will research participants receive payment/ gifts/ vouchers/ etc. for participating in this study? |  |  |  |
| 25 | Are you accessing, collecting or analysing confidential agency documents or case files?  If yes, please give details of compliance with the agency’s policy on data protection and confidentiality below in your review. |  |  |  |
| 26 | If your research is conducted on the internet, does it involve human participants (e.g. through web surveys, social media, accessing or utilising data (information) generated by or about the participant/s; or involve observing human participants in their online interactions/behaviour)? If yes, please review and utilise the UCC policy for conducting Internet Research. |  |  |  |

**If you did not tick any shaded boxes proceed to Part B and complete the relevant form. If you did tick shaded boxes please proceed directly to Part C and complete the relevant form.**

**PART B: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

*Ethical review requires that you* ***reflect*** *and seek to* ***anticipate*** *ethical issues that may arise,*

*rather than reproduce copious text from existing research proposals into these boxes.*

*Entries should be* ***concise*** *and relevant to the point/ question.*

|  |
| --- |
| **A. Very brief description of your study** (15-25 words max.)  [e.g. This is a narrative literature review (desk-based) examining group work interventions with young people on the theme of sexual health] |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **B. What is your study about? (Aim and Objectives / Key Research Questions)** (100-150 words max.) |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **C. Concise statement of *anticipated* ethical issues raised by your project. How do you intend to deal with them?** For example, your research could be desk-based but may still involve sensitive/ controversial material(100-150 words max.). In relation to any kind of research with human subjects you need to address the issue of **informed consent** and how that will be addressed, **safe data storage** (see page 8 of this document) for the duration of the project and beyond and how you will safeguard the **rights and welfare of research subjects.** If research is being conducted with **any** human subjects, information leaflets, consent forms etc., which have supervisor oversight, should be routinely used. |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **D. Have you discussed ethical issues pertaining to your research and has your supervisor approved what you are proposing?** |
| Text here |

**PART C: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

*Ethical review requires that you* ***reflect*** *and seek to* ***anticipate*** *ethical issues that may arise,*

*rather than reproduce copious text from existing research proposals into these boxes.*

*Entries should be* ***concise*** *and relevant to the point/ question.*

|  |
| --- |
| **A. Very brief description of your study** (15-25 words max.)  [i.e. This is a qualitative study of primary school teachers’ attitudes towards religious teaching using focus groups to collect original data] |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **B. What is your study about?** (Please include your research objectives and research questions here. 200 words max.) |
| Text here |

|  |
| --- |
| **C. Brief description and justification of methods and measures to be used** (attach questionnaire/ interview protocol/ focus group discussion guide etc.) |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **D. Participants** (recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/ inclusion criteria, detail permissions to be sought/ secured already). Please ensure that your supervisor sees any relevant information sheets and consent forms, confidentiality agreements etc. that you intend to use with research participants. How will you ensure that research participants’ rights and needs are looked after in the research process? |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **E. Concise statement of *anticipated* ethical issues raised by your project. How do you intend to deal with them? Please address *all* items where your answers fell into a shaded box in the self-evaluation above.** (200 words max.) |
| Text here |

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| --- |
| **F. Where will you store your data (paper and electronic files) over the duration of the project and after it has ended? How will you anonymise the data? How will you ensure no unauthorised person will be able to access confidential research materials?** (150 words max.) **See Safe Data Storage on page 8 and read it prior to answering this question.** |
| Text here |

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| **G. Have you discussed the ethics of your proposed research with your supervisor and has your supervisor approved what you are proposing?** |
| Text here |

**What do I show my supervisor with this form?**

1. A copy of your *draft* data collection instrument(s) (interview guide, questionnaire, survey, focus group schedule, etc.).
2. A copy of your information guide for the study.
3. A copy of your recruitment materials (emails, letters of invitation, posters etc), information sheet, informed consent form and any other forms used in the research process.

**Website links and helpful resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [**UCC Code of Research Conduct and Research Policies**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/policies/) | [**EU Commission, Responsible Research and Innovation**](https://ec.europa.eu/info/h2020-swafs-2019-rri_en)  [**RRI Tools Website**](http://www.rri-tools.eu/) |
| [**UCC Child Safeguarding Statement**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/policy/) | [**Irish Qualitative Data Archive**](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/iqda)(IQDA) |
| [**Guidance Document for Conducting Internet Research**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/ethicswebpage/GUIDANCEDOCUMENTFORCONDUCTINGRESEARCHONONLINEPLATFORMSfinal22Jan19.pdf) | [**Irish Social Science Data Archive**](http://www.ucd.ie/issda/)(quantitative datasets) |
| [**Garda Vetting of UCC Staff**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/gardavetting/) | [**Health Service Executive National Consent Policy**](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/National-Consent-Policy-August-2017.pdf) |
| [**UCC Student Garda Vetting Policy**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/studyatucc/undergrads/downloadabledocumentssection/UCCStudentVettingPolicyandProcedure.pdf) | [**UCC IT Service Catalogue**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/) |
| [**UCC Data Protection Policy and Procedures**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/gdpr/policyandprocedures/) | [**UCC GDPR website**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/gdpr/) |
| [**UCC Library Research Data Service**](https://libguides.ucc.ie/researchdataservice/home) | [**UCC Guidance for Researchers Conducting Research with Vulnerable People**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/ethicswebpage/VulnerabilityGuidanceDocumentApril2019.pdf) |
| [**UCC Supplied Survey Platforms**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/surveys/) | [**SREC FAQs and Amendment Process**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/socialresearch/faqs/#amendment-requests) |
| [**UCC Device Encryption Service**](http://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/encryptionlaptop/) | [**SREC Video Training Series**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/socialresearch/trainingvideos/) |
| [**Qualtrics SharePoint Site**](https://uccireland.sharepoint.com/sites/QualtricsUCC)  [**Qualtrics - UCC login**](https://ucc.qualtrics.com/) | [**UCC student population survey approval process**](https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentsurveys/surveyrequestsinternal/) |

**Guidelines on Safe Data Storage**

As researchers, it is imperative that we can assure our participants that their data will be stored securely; this is of course particularly important where potentially sensitive personal details are involved. It is not adequate to simply say that the data will be stored safely. Exact detail is required as to the use (and location) of locked cabinets, management of audio files, encryption of laptops, electronic storage and so on.  Where possible **physical data** such as survey forms etc. should be converted to electronic format as soon as possible and the originals shredded. However, if you must retain physical data then it should be safely stored on premises at UCC or in a locked cabinet in a secure location.

**Treating Identifiable Data**

1. Data should be converted to anonymous / pseudo-anonymous form as soon as is possible, thus opening the possibility of storing the data on OneDrive etc.
2. Applicants should never store research data on a USB and only use an encrypted portable hard drive for short-term storage until data has been anonymised / pseudo-anonymised.
3. All data, both anonymised and non-anonymised, including sensitive personal data, can be collected, and stored on UCC approved and [**UCC-Supplied Microsoft Products (OneDrive, Teams, SharePoint, Microsoft Forms, etc.)**](https://uccireland.sharepoint.com/sites/it-dac/SitePages/Storage-Advice.aspx) **subject to logging in with one’s UCC credentials**. **Personal** **versions** of Microsoft apps **should not** be used to collect and/or store research data.
4. Applicants must consider how to maintain safe storage of their data beyond the life of their project. All laptops and PCs used to access data must be encrypted and password protected.
5. Data should be deleted from dictaphones or other small easily stolen /lost devices at the earliest available opportunity after it has been saved to an encrypted and password protected PC / laptop. Keep a master copy and working copy of your data.
6. If transcription of interviews etc. is being outsourced, the transcription service used needs to be trustworthy, reliable, and confidential. It is essential that data transferred outside of UCC is done securely (see [HEAnet FileSender](https://www.heanet.ie/services/hosting/filesender)). Please note that the only software and cloud-based transcription services approved by UCC for use in research for transcribing audio data are the tools embedded in Microsoft’s products: use the dictate tool in newer versions of Microsoft Word, and the dictate and transcribe audio file upload tool through the online Office 365 Microsoft Word when using your UCC credentials, and Microsoft Stream/Microsoft Teams when using your UCC credentials. Consent forms should not be retained separately from data.
7. Outputs / data from undergraduate research projects and taught postgraduate programmes, subject to review by the relevant Programme Director/Supervisor/PI, may be retained for a shorter period (a minimum of 13 months) than the usual data retention period in the university of ten years. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are obliged to keep a full dataset safe for 13 months for data retention purposes (unless for any reason the 10 year data retention period applies) and to take responsibility to delete it. Should you require guidance on how and where to retain your dataset safely for the required data retention period, speak with your supervisor / year co-ordinator.

**Treating Anonymised Data**

1. If confidential data has been anonymised or if you have public or non-sensitive data, then the UCC-supplied OneDrive for Business through UCC Office 365 can be used for data storage. The **personal** versions of OneDrive **should not** be used to store research data.

UCC also has a site licence for [Qualtrics](https://ucc.qualtrics.com/) for online survey data collection for academic research and research adjacent projects; however, data should not be stored on this app.

1. Researchers must ensure the confidentiality of data gathered in the course of the research (i.e. where that data is not already in the public domain). Where appropriate they must ensure privacy or anonymity of human participants. Researchers should not intrude into persons’ lives beyond what is required for the purpose of the research. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Relevant work constitutes any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)