

Guidance on Research with ethical issues but not involving human participants v1 18 October 2017

Most applications for ethical review and approval involve human participants as research subjects, but a significant number do not. This guidance aims to help the Project Manager and Applicant think through the issues and submit an appropriate application for ethical approval.

The aim of the following list of types and examples of ethical issues for research without human participants is to aid reflection and ensure that all such issues are considered, irrespective of where the research is carried out. The list is not comprehensive nor exhaustive, and the final responsibility to consider and declare all relevant ethical/risk issues still lies with the Project Manager and Applicant.

Consider any ethical issues concerning:

- Risk to the research team and any other people impacted by the research project, for example, involving hazardous materials, or travel to possibly risky locations. See the UWE Risk Assessment website at <https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides/Guide/risk-assessment>. Attach a completed UWE risk assessment form to the application for ethical approval.
- Animal welfare and Animal by-products. For further information, contact the UWE Research Governance Team at researchgovernance@uwe.ac.uk.
- Environmental impact. Is there a risk that your research could contribute to any kind of pollution, environmental degradation, flooding, etc? Consider any processes, laboratory procedures, materials and equipment you are planning to use in your research – what are the implications for the environment, and long term sustainability?
- Infringement of the law. Might your research break the law or encourage others to do so?
- Conflicts of interest. Do you, or any of the research team, have a conflict of interest or loyalty that might impede or demotivate you from properly fulfilling the aims of the research or from carrying out the research in an ethical manner?
- Financial self-interest. Do you or any member of the research team have a personal financial interest in the conduct or outcomes of the research (including IP beyond UWE)? If so, then you must declare this within the application form.
- Impact on society. Could any conduct or outcome of your research contribute to causing conflict within society, be it at the local, national or international level. Might it escalate tension between different ethnic, religious, national or political groups?

- Reputational damage to UWE, Bristol. Could any aspect of the conduct of the research cause you and/or the University to be justly criticised or viewed in a bad light?
- When anonymised datasets are aggregated, it is possible to re-identify sources of information that had been de-identified in the stand-alone dataset? For example, data collected for different purposes by different state agencies might if aggregated, pose a danger of data-linkage making re-identification. Even though your research might not directly involve human participants, you must give careful consideration to this potential danger and the possible need to gain informed consent from such indirect participants.

Guidance for Ethical Approval of Research Projects without Human Participants
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