

## University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

### Guidelines on Ethical Review of Evaluation Studies and Evaluation Research

#### 1. *Who is this guidance for?*

This guidance is for all UWE staff and students studying at all levels (U/G, M level, PhD, Prof Doc). Evaluations of UWE services and evaluations being conducted by UWE staff or students in other organisations are covered by this guidance.

#### 2. *What is UWE policy on ethical review?*

UWE's research ethics policy is aimed at ensuring that ethical protection is afforded to human participants in any research or evaluation study. Details of the policy may be found at

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics>

Ethical issues can arise, for example, in relation to the collection and use of personal data, confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and data security, data sharing or archiving and disposal of data. Informed consent is a central principle in the conduct of research with human participants, their data or tissue.

#### 3. *What is evaluation?*

Evaluations generally seek to systematically assess the efficacy, efficiency or effects of a particular service or policy. There are different understandings of evaluation but often evaluation is aimed at improving services.

Audit is commonly seen as measuring a service against set standards. Ethical review of audit activity is not necessary. If you are unsure whether your proposed activity is an audit or service evaluation then please seek advice from [Researchethics@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Researchethics@uwe.ac.uk).

A customer satisfaction survey, or module evaluation, which does not collect any personal data will not normally be regarded as an evaluation study. Personal data includes name, email address, home address, student or employee number, job title or any other identifier.

Studies that are designed to make links to existing personal data held for example on ISIS or by HR will normally require ethics review. If you are unsure whether or not your proposed activity is an evaluation please seek advice from [Researchethics@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Researchethics@uwe.ac.uk).

The Health Research Authority provides a tool for those working in an NHS setting to help decide whether or not a study is research, evaluation or audit

<http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/>

**4. What kinds of methods are used in evaluation studies/research?**

A range of methods may be used to conduct an evaluation. Existing data sets may be analysed or new data generated. It is common for survey methods, interviews, focus groups, action research, document analysis, secondary data analysis or mixed methods to be used.

**5. Does an evaluation study or evaluation research project require ethics review by a Research Ethics Committee?**

Yes, if the study is conducted by a member of staff or PGR student and it involves human participants, their data or tissue.

Evaluations of UWE services involving students and/or staff will usually require ethics review unless no new data is being collected and the evaluation uses existing personal data in a way which complies with the University's Data Protection policy.

The University's Data Protection guidance sets out the requirements relating to the protection and use of student and staff data.

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/its/itpolicies/dataprotection.aspx>

Evaluation studies which seek additional uses of such data, or where the results of an evaluation are expected to be published externally, requires ethics review by the University Research Ethics Committee. If you are unsure of whether or not your proposed study requires ethics review please seek the advice of UREC by contacting [Research.Ethics@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Research.Ethics@uwe.ac.uk)

Routine module evaluations are not regarded as evaluation research and do not require ethics review because they do not collect personal data or identifying information and are primarily designed to aid curriculum development.

Evaluation studies conducted by U/G or M level students are subject to the same ethical review processes as research described in the 'UWE Operating procedures for ethical review of student projects' at

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/policyandprocedures.aspx>

**6. What kind of ethical review do service evaluations in the NHS require?**

If the evaluation is carried out in the NHS and involves NHS staff and/or patients or their data then it will NOT require ethics review by an NHS REC but it WILL require ethics review from a UWE REC.

**7. What kinds of ethical issues arise in relation to evaluation studies/research?**

As with other types of research there may be ethical issues to consider including for example:

- recruitment and selection of participants
- procedures for seeking consent
- anonymisation of data
- confidentiality
- risks to participants
- data protection
- data storage and data management
- data sharing and archiving
- data disposal

Applications for ethical review should discuss all such ethical issues and the measures the evaluator/researcher will take to address them.

**8. How do I apply for ethical approval?**

For further information about how to apply for ethical approval of your project please see

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics>

Professor Julie Kent (Chair UREC)

3/2/15

Academic Board, 20 May 2015