

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER  
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF, RESEARCHERS  
AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS  
Version 1, June 2020**

**1. University of Leicester Research Ethics structures and documents**

There are a number of ethics policies, guidelines and resources under the UoL Research Ethics and Integrity Committee. These documents are constantly being updated, and these links will be periodically reviewed in the document. We have developed our internal document to highlight some specific issues to Psychology research and our Research Ethics Committee. This document only applies to academic staff, researchers and postgraduate (PG) students. There are separate guidelines on undergraduate (UG) student research dissertations on supervisors' and students' Blackboard space.

For general **UoL Research Ethics Policies and Resources**, please visit:  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ethics>

The UoL website includes documents on:

- Code of Practice
- Guidance of Research Ethics
- Resources, Training and Links
- Research Ethics Committees
- Apply for Ethical Approval
- Frequently Asked Questions

For **Research Data Management policies and guidelines**, please visit:  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/services/research-data>

**Online Research Ethics Training** can be found in the Blackboard Module "Research Essentials Online". You should see it in your list of courses next time you log into Blackboard. You can find the research ethics training in the "Methods and Tools" section, in the folder marked "Ethics in Research". There is a recording of a seminar on the topic, accompanying slides, and a test to be undertaken. In order to pass the test you must score in excess of 80%. You can take the test as many times as you need.

**2. Practical considerations**

Please take serious consideration of ethical issues in your project, as these may delay or prevent your proposed study. PG students should discuss with your supervisor and, if necessary, your supervisor should contact the ethics committee well in advance. Always meet and discuss with your supervisor before submitting your initial or original proposal. Never submit without such prior meeting and discussion.

Check that your research topic is related to the Psychology Research Committee, rather than Medicine and Biological Research Ethics Committee or falls under NHS research ethics jurisdiction because of involving NHS patients and/or staff.

Please do not contact members of the ethics committee directly. A delay in your project is no reason to expedite the ethics review, so factor in this step well in advance. The ethics committee normal turnaround time being of two weeks.

### **3. Submission procedure**

Ethics approval is obtained through the online portal:

<https://ethicsapp.le.ac.uk/ethics/>

Under the 'Applicant' tab of the application form, PG students should complete the following box: 'Name of any co-researcher(s) or applicant(s)'– this should be their supervisor.

If PG students complete this correctly, the form will first go to their supervisor for them to check through. The supervisor will then send it back to the student for amendment or submission by the student. You then need to formally **submit** to the Ethics Committee (press green button). This is a common reason for applicants being under the false impression that the ethics decision has been delayed.

Once submitted, the application is sent to the committee Administrator Ms Joy Kocik, who will allocate it to two ethics committee members, from:

Professor Panos Vostanis (Chair)  
Dr John Barratt  
Professor Andrew Colman  
Dr Todor Gerdjikov  
Dr Ruth Hatcher  
Dr David Souto  
Dr Alice Welham (Clinical Psychology only)  
Ms Joy Kocik (Administrator)

### **4. Documents to submit**

Information letter: What you tell the participant before the study, to enable them to make an informed decision. There are standard headings and sections to include (see template below), which the UoL central committee periodically updates. Please use non-technical language that is easy to understand. Please prepare an information letter and consent form for each participant group (e.g. parents and teachers). Use developmentally appropriate language for children and young people.

Consent form: The participant's written agreement to participate, based on the information provided and a list of what their consent involves. In case of children and young people under 16 years, parents need to provide written consent. Parents should be given the options of agreeing for themselves, their child or both parent and

child to participate. Even if a parent has provided informed content in writing for their child to participate, the child should also have the opportunity to assent verbally and make their own decision.

Duty of care (if applicable): This template should only be used as part of the implementation of the special duty of care procedure, when using a clinical scale (a measure that can be used in the context of a potentially clinical condition such as depression). Even though most researchers are not qualified to provide a diagnosis and questionnaires are not diagnostic, we have a duty to disclose information to the student if they score within a clinical range, for them to decide whether to seek further assessment and/or support. We will then point them to relevant sources of help. It is also important not to create unnecessary anxiety on what a raised score means, thus consider the wording carefully (see template example below).

Evidence you gained necessary permissions by letter or email from authorised gatekeeper (if you carry research e.g. in schools or other organisations, this may apply to your application): The gatekeeper provides their agreement in principle to approach potential participants. This does NOT mean that they can agree on their behalf for their participation. A gatekeeper also has the responsibility to protect (safeguard) the participants' interests. If your study involves recruitment from an external organisation, you will thus need to provide evidence by a letter (although an e-mail could be acceptable in some circumstances) from the responsible gatekeeper (for example, manager or head teacher).

Instruments: All instruments used in the research should be uploaded. These include checklists for secondary data collection from sources such as documents, and interview guides for individual or group interviews.

Please note that you may not be able to delete or replace attachments in the system, instead you can add new or revised documents as new uploads. The ethics committee member will be familiar with this technical difficulty, as each uploaded document has a date next to it.

## **5. Research data management issues**

Please read carefully the UoL policies, as delineated above. Some key points in summary:

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Holding personal data falls under General Data Protection Regulations. Personal data is any information that can identify an individual, directly or indirectly.

Anonymised data that cannot be used to identify specific individuals is not personal data.

### **Data minimization**

We should not hold more personal data than needed for the purpose of the research ("just in case").

## **Data retention**

You should not keep personal data for longer than you need it for.

## **How to deal with sensitive personal data?**

Sensitive data is data concerning racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation. Sensitive personal data should be encrypted and stored in the University security network. If hard copies exist, they should be locked in a locked file drawer cabinet within the University. The data should not be stored on a portable or personal device. Sensitive data should be kept separate from other personal data.

## **How to transfer research data?**

This is the university GDPR and research data (personal data) quick guide:

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ias/resources/policies/gdpr/Guidance%20Note%2012%20GDPR%20and%20Research%20Data%20Quick%20Guide.pdf>

More exhaustive guidance, here:

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ias/resources/policies/gdpr/>

## **6. Amendment requests**

There is a brief form within your application, should you wish to request amendments. These should be minor and not pose ethics concerns. Common reasons are extension of the date, changes in the sample or inclusion of a new instrument, if these are not anticipated to raise ethics issues. Please revise and upload all ethics documents, mainly the information letter, to reflect your proposed amendment. All major revisions should be sought through a new application.

## **7. Monitoring form**

You will be asked to fill a monitoring on the end of the study. Put in there any remarks on issues that arose during the experiment, e.g. as fed back to you by the participant. The purpose of this form is to capture ethics lessons for the future.

## TEMPLATES

These are only indicative examples:

### INFORMATION LETTER TEMPLATE

**Title of study: ...**

(please consider a title that is neither misleading nor anxiety-provoking)

#### **Invitation**

My name is (add). I am (affiliation) at the University of Leicester in the UK, supervised by (name). I will be conducting this study as part of my third year research dissertation. I would very much like to invite you to take part in this study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take as much time as you need to read the following information carefully. You can discuss it with others if you wish. Please feel free to contact me, if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would need more information on the study before deciding to participate.

#### **The purpose of this study**

The aim of this research is to ...

#### **Why you have been chosen**

You have been invited to participate, because ...

#### **Do you have to take part?**

No. It is completely your decision whether to participate or not in this study. If you decide to participate in this research study, please read and then sign the informed consent document. A decision to withdraw will not affect your studies in any way. You will be offered the chance to have a brief report of the findings, so that you can see how the data has been used.

#### **What you have to do**

Describe in clear and practical terms.

#### **Will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Yes. All of the information collected during this research study will be kept strictly confidential. No names or identifiable information will be collected, and all collected data will be securely stored.

#### **What will happen to the results of the study?**

The information collected will be analysed, written up and included in my research dissertation. Potential dissemination to be included only if the supervisor has evidence why this study is likely to be published.

#### **Additional supports**

Only if relevant to the study. An example for research interviews (same principle for all designs):

We will not be asking any personal questions on your previous experiences. However, the discussion may trigger some difficult memories. If you decide, you can take a break, leave the discussion group, or withdraw from the study at any time. If, during or

after the discussion, you feel that you require additional information or help, you could contact:

Student welfare details

General Practitioner / Health Centre

Specific support groups, services or helpline details: e.g. among those <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at any time. The contact information is as follows: [XXX@le.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@le.ac.uk), [XXX@le.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@le.ac.uk)

Please include contact details of:

1. Student
  2. Supervisor
  3. Chair of Ethics Committee, Professor Panos Vostanis (email: [pv11@le.ac.uk](mailto:pv11@le.ac.uk))
- Thank you!

## CONSENT STATEMENT TEMPLATE

### Title of the study

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time during the period of the study, and up until the point when the study will be completed and the data will have been analysed, without giving any reason.
2. I am aware of what my participation will involve.
3. I am aware that my data will be anonymous.
4. My data will be kept securely for a period of at most three years. Any aggregate data (e.g. spreadsheets) will be kept in electronic form indefinitely, but will be anonymous and will not have any identifying information (e.g. names/e-mails) included on them.
5. In accordance with the requirements of some scientific journals and organizations, my coded data may be shared with other competent researchers. My coded data may also be used in other related studies. My name and other identifying details will not be shared with anyone.
6. The overall findings may be submitted for publication in a scientific journal, or presented at scientific conferences.
7. This study will take approximately one year to complete.
8. I will be able to obtain general information about the results of this research by giving the researchers my email address now.  
I am giving my consent for data to be used for the outlined purposes of the present study.  
All questions that I have about the research have been satisfactorily answered.

I agree to participate.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive a summary of the results by e-mail, when this is available, please provide your email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note that this form will be kept separately from your data**

## DUTY OF CARE TEMPLATE

Given that our research sometimes involves collecting questionnaire data concerning participants' psychological health, there is a chance that some participants will fall within the clinical range, i.e. a score that may indicate mental health concerns that require assessment and/or support.

In the case of a participant reaching clinical scores on the (mental health questionnaire), we will have a protocol in place in accordance with our duty of care to the participant. Specifically, if a participant's ID (code) is identified as having a score which falls within the clinical range according to the established clinical cut-offs in the literature (e.g. a cut-off score of 14 or above on the Beck Depression Inventory scale).

Please discuss in detail with your supervisor or co-researchers whether your instruments fall within the Duty of Care criteria. If so, how to address these principles for your specific study.

- a. If the researcher has contact details for participants (i.e. before anonymising the data), you can opt to seek consent in advance (see next paragraph) or to contact participants if they score above the clinical cut-off score.
- b. If participants are anonymous (e.g. in online surveys), they will need to explicitly request in advance in the consent form to be contacted, in case that his/her questionnaire were in the clinical range. This will require the participant to add their email and agreement to be contacted in that scenario. This does not mean that we do not have a duty of care of participants who score within the clinical range but have not provided contact details, however, it would not be possible to address both duty of care and rights to anonymity in these situations.

Dear participant

This message is sent in confidence to you only. Many thanks for your recent participation in the ... study "Questionnaires to assess feelings and experiences". Your responses have been kept confidential and anonymous. You agreed in the consent form to be contacted in case that your scores in one or more questionnaires assessing your general wellbeing were in the clinical range. The scores in one or more questionnaires seems to suggest that you might experience anxiety issues and be susceptible to mildly low mood. However, this by no means indicates a clinical condition. In this case, you may wish to seek further advice and support from the most appropriate service. For example, this could be your GP, the Student Support Service, a helpline, or a specialist agency, as appropriate.

Telephone:     add

Email:         add

Website:       add