

Framework for Delegated Authority for Research Ethics

PROCEDURES

Department of Computer Science
Department of Library and Information Science
City, University of London

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

This document sets out the procedures for undertaking ethical review of research in the **Department of Computer Science (CS)**, and the **Department of Library and Information Science (LIS)** in line with the Departments' **POLICY** for Delegated Authority for Research Ethics.

*This **POLICY** was developed from the CSREC Research Governance documentation produced by Stephanie Wilson and colleagues. Their important contributions are acknowledged. Updates have been made in light of changes to research governance processes at City, University of London, with revisions agreed through discussion with members of City's SREC and advice from Research & Enterprise.*

2. ETHICS APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH IN THE CS AND LIS

The Computer Science Research Ethics Committee (CSREC) handles ethical review of low and medium risk research activity for both departments; approval for high-risk projects must be sought from either the University's Senate REC or an appropriate external ethics committee.

The CSREC handles low risk research by a proportionate review process; medium risk research is handled by a full application to the CSREC.

There are separate proportionate review processes –

one for staff and research students (section 3),

another for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students (section 4).

Approval must always be obtained before the research can commence; approval cannot be granted retrospectively.

Failure to obtain approval may result in disciplinary action and/or the refusal of permission to publish research findings.

3. ETHICS APPROVAL FOR STAFF AND RESEARCH STUDENTS

3.1 Proportionate Review Applications to CSREC: Staff and Research Students

Staff and research students wishing to apply for a proportionate review of low-risk research must complete the CSREC "*Ethics Proportionate Review Form*". The form has two parts: part A is a checklist to confirm that the research is low-risk; part B is the application form itself.

The completed form along with all necessary attachments should be submitted electronically to the Chair of the CSREC. The Chair will register the application and pass it on to the member currently designated as responsible for proportionate review for consideration and a decision. In cases where the member coordinating proportionate review has a conflict of interest an alternative lead reviewer will be selected by the Chair. This lead will be responsible for reviewing the application and responding to the applicant. To ensure that all proportionate review applications are considered by at least two members of the CSREC, the Chair will also comment on the application or ask a second member of the committee to do so, again ensuring that any conflicts of interest are avoided. These additional comments are passed back to the lead reviewer for consideration prior to the decision and communication with the applicant.

The decision will be one of the following:

- a. Approve as submitted
- b. Request minor amendments
(*to be approved by the lead reviewer within a given time-scale*).
- c. Reject

In most cases, a reject decision will be accompanied by a recommendation to submit a full ethics application to an appropriate REC.

3.2 Full Applications to CSREC: Staff and Research Students

The CSREC handles ethical review of medium risk research undertaken by staff and research students via a "*full application*" process. Any member of staff or research student who is unsure about the level of ethical review required, or where they should apply, should complete the checklist in the proportionate review form.

Full applications to the CSREC should be made by completing the Senate REC's "*Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Participants*" form available from the University's pages on Research Ethics:

<https://www.city.ac.uk/research/research-and-enterprise/research-ethics>.

Applicants should also use the templates for information sheets and consent forms that are available on these pages. Completed applications should be submitted electronically to the Chair of the CSREC.

The Chair, or a designated lead reviewer invited by the Chair, will register the application and circulate it to all members of the committee. The Chair, or designated lead, and two other members of the committee will be assigned to review and provide a recommendation for each application. These reviewers must not have conflicts with the applicant. Other members of the committee may also comment if they wish to do so. The lead reviewer will synthesise all responses from members and respond to the applicant.

The recommendation will be one of the following:

- a. Approve as submitted
- b. Request minor amendments
(*to be completed by a specified date and approved by Chair's action*)
- c. Request major amendments (*to be reviewed again by the CSREC*)
- d. Refer to the Senate REC or other external REC
- e. Reject

4. ETHICS APPROVAL FOR UG AND TAUGHT PG STUDENTS

Undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students are required to consider the ethical aspects of their work and to ensure that they comply with ethical guidelines.

4.1 Proportionate Review Applications: UG and PGT Projects

All UG and PGT students undertaking their final project are required to complete the CSREC "*Ethics Review Form: BSc, MSc and MA Projects*" and attach it to their project definition document or research proposal.

There are two components to the form. Part A is an ethics checklist that identifies whether a project requires approval from an ethics committee and, if so, where to apply. All students must complete this part. Part B is an application for proportionate review for low-risk projects: only those students whose projects require a proportionate review for low-risk research should complete this part. Supervisors are required to consider whether the student has completed the ethics checklist correctly and are delegated to sign-off low-risk projects. This is likely to be a *provisional approval* in the first instance with final versions of the documentation that describes the study fully requiring subsequent approval by the supervisor. Supervisors should seek advice from the Chair of the CSREC if they are uncertain about authorizing the ethics form. If a project does not comply with the criteria for a low-risk project, the student must submit a full ethics application to either the CSREC, the Senate REC or an external ethics committee.

4.2 Full Applications: UG and PGT Projects

If the ethics checklist indicates that a full application to the CSREC is required, UG and PGT students should follow the process set out in section 3.2.

5. OTHER POINTS

5.1 Recruiting City Staff and Students

Any researcher wishing to recruit participants because they are staff or students of City, University of London (e.g. because they are taking a specific module or are enrolled on a specific programme) must seek prior approval from the Head of Department or Programme Director of the programme concerned.

5.2 Applications to an External REC or Senate REC

If an application is submitted to an external REC or the Senate REC, applicants must also notify the Chair of the CSREC of the submission, the verdict and any approval acquired.

5.3 Amending a Project

If an applicant wishes to amend a project that has already been approved by the CSREC, an amendment form must be submitted to the Chair. The form should be submitted electronically to the Chair of the CSREC. Approval must be obtained before the research can commence.

Amendments will be considered by the Chair's action. However, if the Chair considers that the amendment is major, the applicant may be asked to resubmit their application for review by the whole committee.

5.4 Adverse Events or Untoward Incidents

Applicants are required to inform their supervisor (in the case of students), the CSREC Chair and the Secretary of the SREC at the earliest opportunity if any breaches of ethical approval take place or if an adverse event occurs during the research. These might include: harm to a participant, a breach of confidentiality, a complaint by a participant or other untoward incident.

5.5 Timings

To address the need for a timely response to applications, the CSREC reviews applications electronically as and when they are submitted. The CSREC has a target of **3 weeks** for an initial response to applications made through proportionate review and **4 weeks** for full applications. Applicants should plan for this when making their submission. This target may not be achievable during holiday periods or busy times of year. Note that this is not the time for final approval as re-submission may be required during the process of peer review.

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