Commonly made mistakes

There are a number of mistakes that may delay the approval of your application. Some of these mistakes can result in your application not being put forward to and reviewed by the Committee until you have complied with the requirements, which could mean you could have to wait until the following meeting, and/or submit a new set of copies. Below are examples of some of these mistakes, as well as advice on how to avoid them.

Note that you are welcome to submit your application electronically to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee at any time, but at least two weeks in advance of the deadline you are intending your protocol to be submitted to, for initial comments, or set up a personal meeting to discuss your protocol.

Below is a list of hints and tips to help you prepare your application and avoid delay to the start of your project.

**The application guidelines have not been followed.**
All application guidelines and the application form are frequently updated to ensure that the application process is as smooth as possible. **Following the guidelines avoids delays.**

**Sections of the application form have not been completed.**
All sections of the application form should be completed. There may be instances when a question does not apply to your research, but remember that most sections will be relevant to all applications and projects. The Committee recommends that all sections are considered and responded to. ‘Not applicable’ should only be used in instances such as under section 5, if the research does not involve vulnerable groups and/or children, or to respond to a follow-on questions to which the answered was ‘no’, or similar.

**The application has not been signed by the required person/persons.**
All applications have to be signed by the Principal Investigator. Students are not allowed to act as Principal Investigators and need to apply jointly with their supervisors. Both student and supervisor are required to sign the application form.

Applications are also required to be signed off by Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) or authorised signatory. **No other signatures are accepted.**

Your application will not be review by the Committee if it has not been signed off correctly.

**The application is using unexplained technical language, poor grammar or is unclear.**
Applications may be returned without review if the application includes technical language without common explanation, if the application is poorly constructed grammatically, or if the application is unclear.

**The wrong application form has been submitted.**
The application form and guidelines are constantly updated to ensure that they cover all ethical issues Research Ethics Committee will need you to address. It is therefore recommended that you always download a new application form, for each new protocol, to ensure that you have the latest version. You should also make sure that you hand in
the correct number of copies, since this changes from time to time as the Committee expands.

**The start date of the research has already passed.**
Ethical approval **MUST** be obtained before any research involving human participants is undertaken. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures being instigated, and you will not be cover by the University’s indemnity if you do not have approval in place. The start date on the application form should be at least 6 week after the date of the Research Ethics Committee meeting, which you are submitting to. This is to allow time to amend the protocol, provide information the Committee might be seeking, or any other issues the Committee wants you to respond to.

**Potential risks, conflicts of interest and how these will be avoided/managed have not been addressed.**
Some examples of risks/conflicts of interest that may arise are:
- What would you do if a participant became distressed?
- What safety issues might there be for a researcher visiting a participants home and what measures have been put in place to deal with these issues?
- Do participants know you or a member of the research team, and if so, is there a risk of them feeling coerced into taking part in the project?
- Is the research sponsored by a company/individual involved in the project?

**None City University email address/phone number.**
City University London email addresses should be used at all times, as these are the only ones the University can guarantee are secure. It is recommended that no personal phone numbers are used, or a separate SIM card is used for the project. This is also essential to keep in mind when you write your information sheet and consent form.

**Curriculum Vitae**
The only CV details that will be accepted, is section 8 on the application form. Only information relevant to the application is sought and attachments will not be accepted. These details must be provided for all persons involved in the research, including external co-investigators and students. Duplicate this section of the form for each person involved.

**The Information Sheet/Consent form is not in lay language**
If a person does not understand the purpose of the research study you are asking them to take part in, they cannot give informed consent. All documents **must** be written in a language comprehensible to the participants you are intending to recruit. In some cases, for instance if you are intending to work with children of different ages, you may need several version of both the information sheet and consent form in order to ensure that the language is targeted at the right level.

**The Information Sheet/Consent documents are misspelt or poorly constructed.**
In order to attract participants and ensure that they understand what is being asked of them, it is vital that the information you provide is clear and carefully checked. Asking a colleague to read through any documents is highly recommended.

**The Information Sheet/Consent documents are missing required information.**
There are certain points that all information sheets and consent forms need to include. You need to make sure that you include all of the required elements. Examples of both information sheets and consent forms are available.

**Who is doing the research and for what purpose?**
It should be clear in both the protocol and recruitment documents who you are and why you are conducting the researcher. For instance, if the research is a part of an M-level project, you will need to include this on the information sheet. You will also need to include information about what you are intending to do with the collected data – e.g. present at conferences or publish the findings in journals.

**Criminal Records Bureau check not in place.**
If your research includes children you are required to have a CRB check before you can begin the research. You are advised to apply for this well in advance of the start date for your research. An enhanced CRB check takes approximately 4-6 weeks. **If you are required to have a CRB check to conduct your research, you will need to have this done before you start your research or you will be in breach with the grounds on which the Committee approved your application, and subsequently you will not be covered by the University indemnity.**

**Correspondence not included**
Copies of all correspondence with external organisations confirming permission to advertise, use facilities, contact staff/students/parents etc. have to be attached to your application. If you do not including the documents, the approval of your applications will be delayed.