Application Guidelines

Guidelines and advice on completing the application form for approval of research involving human participants and personal data

You are responsible for ensuring that you obtain the appropriate and required ethical approval before you begin your research and it is important that you consider the ethical implications of your research. The application form and these web pages are designed to pre-empt, as far as possible, the need for the Committee to ask for changes to be made to your documents. You are therefore asked to read these guidelines thoroughly in order to prevent unnecessary delay to the approval of your application. The guidelines will provide you with useful tools and processes to consider when you are completing the application form and to point out areas and issues that you should think about, and information you may need to include in the documentation.

The application form is self-explanatory but you are strongly urged to look through this guide as it explains why you are asked to provide certain information. A section regarding additional issues to think about - such as research being undertaken abroad, student and supervisor considerations, peer review etc - can be found here. If there is a question not relevant to you, ‘not applicable’ is an acceptable answer, but do try to respond to all sections, and justify ‘not applicable’ with a short explanatory sentence. Note that most questions are relevant and if you do not provide an answer you can expect to be asked to do so after the Committee has reviewed your application. This can lead to delays in the approval process, and therefore also delay the start of your project.

You are required to make yourself available to attend the meeting(s) in which your application is being considered. This is in an effort to speed up the process as the Committee will be able to clarify any issues and requirements with you directly and thus reduce the time it will take for your research project to be formally approved. If the Committee does require you to attend, you will be notified 3-4 working days before the scheduled meeting. You can also request to attend the meeting in order to explain any issues and answer questions. If you do wish to attend, contact the Secretary to the Committee who will be able to advise you further.

You can normally expect a response within 10 working days after the Committee meeting to which you submitted your application has taken place. The deadlines and meetings dates can be found here.

You need to notify the Committee of any amendments to the study questions, design or conduct over the course of the research, as well as any additions or changes to the individuals involved in the project, in order that any further consideration required by the Committee can take place. Your will also need to notify the Committee if you require an extension to your project. Please use the appropriate form to submit notifications of changes and/or requests for extension. You are required to submit an adverse events form within 15 days of the incident.

Application Form

1. Non-Expert Information
You are asked to provide this information for the Committee members. Because the Committee is made up of members with expertise across a range of areas, it is helpful if the project is explained in lay terms at the beginning of the application so that the non-experts can approach the proposed research with a clear understanding of its content.
The lay title should be no more than 80 characters and be understandable to a non-expert, i.e. refrain from using jargon or unnecessarily academic language. This title can also be used for the information form / consent form.

The plain language statement should clearly identify the purposes of the proposed research study. It is an abstract or summary of the study and should be written in simple non-technical terms and be easily understood by a lay person.

2. Application Details
This section asks for details concerning yourself (if you are a student you will need your supervisor to make a joint application with you) and any other researchers involved in the project. The main points to note are that City University London email addresses should be used at all times, as these are the only ones the University can guarantee are secure, and that no personal phone numbers should be used. This is also essential to keep in mind when you write your information sheet and consent form.

The staff/student number requested is the number you can find on your ID card.

It is important that you are as specific as possible in regard to the role of student/external co-investigators’ involvement (also note that you are required to provide a Curriculum Vitae in section 8 for all persons involved in the project) as the Committee will want to know who they are approving and for what purpose. For external co-investigators you should also include details regarding their indemnity arrangements.

You need to provide copies of all the correspondence between yourself and any other ethics committee as well as copies of correspondence regarding permissions to conduct research in, at or through another institution or organisation. If you are collaborating with another institution/organisation and you are not seeking approval from that institution/organisation, you should explain why you are not doing so. It is compulsory to provide copies of relevant correspondence to the Committee e.g. letter giving approval, documents requesting amendments. Failure to do so may result in a delay in approving your proposal.

It is considered good practice that only one research ethics committee should review a research project so that a sufficiently thorough and comprehensive review can be undertaken. If you have taken the project or parts of the project to other committees you should justify that.

Note that you cannot begin the proposed project until after the application and documents have been approved by the Committee so make sure that you submit your proposal at least six weeks before you intend to start your research. If you have not completed your research within the estimated time you have stated on the application form you will need to apply for an extension, as after that date the approval is no longer valid and you are no longer indemnified by the University.

2.5 Funding Details
Provide any details relating to funding in this section. Note that you will need to provide details regarding data protection arrangements required by the funding body. For instance, a funding body may want data kept for a certain period after the research has been completed. For externally funded projects the proposal MUST be approved by the Research Grants & Contracts Office.

3. Project Details (not more than 3 pages)
This section, again self-explanatory, is concerned with details of your proposed research project. The main things to remember in this section are that:

The Committee will be looking at the project design and the methodology and analysis you propose to use. In cases when the Committee is unable to comment on the design it will seek advice and the application will be sent to be peer reviewed by two non-Committee members. If the Committee should feel it necessary for your application to be peer reviewed you will be contacted and asked to provide details of one of the reviewers; the Committee will choose a second reviewer to consult with.

All research has some ethical issues. DO NOT leave this blank.

Invasive and intrusive procedures do not only refer to surgical procedures, but to any procedure that may cause harm, which could include questions of a certain nature.

If you think that the investigation might cause pain, discomfort, inconvenience or danger you should include details of an independent source of support that the participants can contact for help. Note that it is not considered good practice to counsel participants if you are also involved in the research.

4. Information on participants
Here you are asked to provide as much detail as possible regarding the participants you are intending to recruit for your study. The Committee will in particular expect to see that you have considered the implications of over-research (i.e. research carried out on a small group of participants who are used in studies over and over again).

Note that payments to a participant should be pro-rated and not be contingent upon completion of the trial by the participants. Any payment or incentive should not be linked to the risk involved in the research; however, it could be linked to the discomfort or burden of participating.

5. Vulnerable Groups
If your research involves children or vulnerable people, you are required to obtain a Criminal Records Bureau Enhanced Disclosure. Information can be found at http://www.crb.gov.uk/.

6. Data Collection
Provide details of how you intend to collect your data.

7. Confidentiality and Data Handling
Provide details regarding the confidentiality arrangements you are intending to implement. You should also provide details regarding storage, accessing data, the destruction of data (how and when) and any information about re-use of data. Note that re-use of data can at times require ethics approval so if you do at any time intend to use data that has already been collected you should always contact the Secretary to the Senate Research Ethics Committee in order to ascertain if you will need to submit an application before going ahead with your project.

8. Curriculum Vitae
These are the only CV details that will be accepted. 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 applicant.

8.1 Supervisor’s statement
This section is for supervisors to provide information regarding training, experience and other details about the student whose research requires ethics approval, to address what makes them competent and qualified to carry out the proposed research. Without this part completed and signed by the supervisor the application cannot be considered by the Committee.

9. Participant’s information sheet
Please use the template provided on the application form. There is no word limit. Further information is available on the explanatory statement.

10. Participant’s consent form
Please use the template provided on the application form. There is no word limit. Further information and guidance on the consent form are available.

11. Additional information
Use this section to provide the Committee with any information that you think would be helpful to them.

12. Declarations by investigator(s)
Ensure that the application has been signed by the principal investigator (and supervisor in the case of all students) and the authorised signatory. All papers (one original and eight copies) must be submitted by 12 noon on the deadline date, to the Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee. You are also required to email a copy of the application to Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk, indicating the names of those signing the hard copy.