

Procedure for the Ethical Review of London Business School Research

1. What is ethical review?

London Business School's *Research Ethics Policy* sets out the key principles of ethical research that researchers at the School are expected to follow, outlines the accountability of researchers and the School, and defines behaviour that constitutes misconduct in research.

Ethical review is an approval process that aims to ensure that research meets the requirements of the *Research Ethics Policy* and the *Code of Conduct* on the use of human data in research.

The review provides a starting point to identify ethical issues - especially risks associated with research design and methods - that potentially need to be addressed before conducting research that involves human participants or personal data.

London Business School is also committed to meeting the ethical standards and requirements of research funding bodies, including The Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

The procedures set out in this document are based broadly on the minimum standards for ethical review as outlined in the *Economic and Social Research Councils (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework (2005, 2010, 2015)*. Adherence to this framework is mandatory for all institutions receiving ESRC funding, and this framework is also recognised by many other external funding bodies, including the overarching body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

2. What does ethical review cover?

Any research undertaken by faculty, research assistants, research fellows, post-docs, staff, or student researchers that involves human participants or the use of personal data requires ethical review.

Specifically, the following types of research are covered under the School's ethical review procedure:

All applications for external research grants submitted by London Business School researchers, and which involve human participants or the use of personal data.

All experiments and research studies using the services of the School's Research Lab conducted by London Business School researchers.

All research involving more than minimal risk, as defined in Section 3 below.

Research that does not fall under the above categories, but nevertheless involves human participants and the use of personal data (for example, survey/questionnaire data collection and field experiments).

It is the responsibility of each researcher at the School to ensure that adequate consideration has been given to the ethical implications of any proposed research. The procedure outlined in this document must not be used as a substitute for the consideration that should be given to the ethical risks associated with any research.

3. Research involving more than minimal risk

The categories below are identified by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) as research that in most cases will involve more than minimal risk. Applications for ethical review that fall into one or more of these categories **must** be referred to the Research Ethics Committee and follow the school's ethical review process.

Research involving **vulnerable groups** – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.

Research involving **sensitive topics** – for example participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, security-sensitive data such as terrorist or extreme groups.

Research involving groups where **permission of a gatekeeper** is normally required for initial access to members – for example research in communities where access to research participants is not possible without the permission of another adult, such as another family member or a community leader.

Research involving **deception** or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.

Research involving access to records of **personal** or **confidential** information, including genetic or other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals

Research which would induce **psychological stress**, **anxiety** or **humiliation** or cause more than minimal pain.

Research involving **intrusive interventions** – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy.

Additionally, in line with London Business School's *Code of Conduct*, any research that has the potential to harm the wellbeing of individuals who are the subject of research, or the wellbeing of researchers, research assistants, research fellows, post-docs, staff, or students involved in the research are also defined as involving more than minimal risk.

4. Approval process

In supporting and upholding integrity and rigour, and meeting the standards outlined in the School's Misconduct Policy, and associated ethical framework:

In the event that your proposed research has been rejected by another institution, researchers must fully disclose this information and include any documentation associated with the external ethical review undertaken.

What do I need to do?

Researchers are required to complete the Online Ethical Application Form. This new form has been introduced to provide the opportunity, to fully consider the ethical implications and risks pertaining to the proposed research, and support the decision-making process.

The form also includes guidelines to support completion.

What Happens Next?

Assessment of applications will be made against the requirements of the School's *Ethics Policy* and *Code of Conduct* and lead to one of the following outcomes:

Expedited approval by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) Chair – The REC Chair (in collaboration with the Research Ethics Committee Administration Team assesses the proposed research as having no significant ethical implications and involving minimal risk.

Proposal approved after consultation with REC members – expedited approval is not given by the Chair in the first instance; all or some REC members are consulted by the REC Chair to further review the ethical issues raised by the research. Approval is subsequently granted, based on the recommendation of the consulted members of the REC.

Proposal referred back to the researcher for changes – so that ethical concerns are addressed and the research plan is amended, and as appropriate all required information and documentation is received. It is the responsibility of the researcher to re-submit the amended application. On receipt of satisfactory amendments to the research plan, approval of the proposal will be granted.

Proposal rejected by the REC - in this case the research poses serious ethical implications with the potential harm to participants outweighing the potential benefits of the research, or the research is not in line with the School's *Code of Conduct* and *Ethics Policy*.

The REC Chair has the authority to approve applications on behalf of the committee and authorise expedited review where appropriate. The members of the REC may also choose to operate virtually as and when the Chair deems this appropriate. The full Terms of Reference of the REC can be found on the School's portal pages).

The day-to-day operational and infrastructure support provided to the REC Chair, is delivered by members of the Research Lab, and the Assistant Director, Research.

Projected timetable for review of applications

The majority of applications received are processed via the expedited route, and applications are normally reviewed on a weekly basis (Wednesday's).

Researchers are advised to seek approval for their as early as possible.

5. Changes to the proposed work

Once ethical approval has been granted, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the research stays in line with the original proposal. If significant changes are made to the research design, methodology, protocol, named personnel, or environment, re-application for ethical review,

or an amendment to any previously approved application will be required. Any changes to the proposed work should be completed and submitted via the online Ethics Application Form. Applicants will then be notified in writing if re-application for ethical review is required.

The designated ethics@london.edu mailbox is also available to researchers to support any questions as appropriate.

6. Student Researchers and the Research Ethics Application Procedure

Student researchers at the School must adhere to the same rules as other researchers. PhD student supervisors should seek to ensure that the students they supervise understand the requirements of the *Ethics Policy* and associated guidelines.

7. Collaborative Research with Partner Organisations and Individuals Outside the School

The School expects researchers to apply the principles underlying the School's *Code of Conduct* even when the work is being done in collaboration with external individuals or organisations.

The School recognises that collaborative research and research involving participants from more than one institution creates complications for formal ethical review procedures. In these instances the following procedures should be adhered to:

In the case of externally funded research, the application for ethical review should be managed by the lead Principal Investigator and lead institution. Where ethical review is conducted at London Business School the procedures set out in this document should be followed. The documentation for any external ethical review conducted will need to be sent to ethics@london.edu **BEFORE** School approval is given for submission of the funding application.

In all other cases, formal responsibility for ethical review would come under the auspices of the institution where the research takes place.

8. Records Management

The Research Support Office will retain records of all applications which have been submitted for ethical review. Given the nature of the ethical review process, and obligations under the School's funding bodies, records on the business of the School's ethics application process, are kept to respond to any audit and governance assurance requests.

Researchers also have a responsibility to retain a copy of ethical review documentation for their own personal records, any project or studies that involves gathering personal data about living individuals, should follow the School's *Data Protection Policy*.

9. Procedure Review

This procedure was approved by Management Board on 21 November 2011 and will be reviewed and updated periodically. It was reviewed by Management Board in May 2016, to make reference to the School's obligations in regard to the Prevent duty. Since this time it has been reviewed periodically, at meetings of the Research Ethics Committee. Latest policy revision: June 2021