

Dear Students,

You should already be aware that if you are collecting data from or about human participants you must obtain ethical approval **before** you start your research. Please find some useful information for EBS students below about the approval process and guidance to help you complete the ethical approval form.

- Please check Moodle for the deadline for ethical approval applications. Forms will not be accepted after this date.
- Please note that ethical approval cannot be given retrospectively. You must not collect any data prior to receiving ethical approval.

Where to start:

- Please read these guidance notes before completing your ethical approval procedure.
- The REO website provides detailed guidelines about the ethical approval procedure, which can be found here: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo/governance/human.aspx>
- You can read about how to design your consent form and participation information sheet here: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo/governance/participants.aspx> (Please note that you will need written consent from all participants unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as illiteracy or welfare issues, when oral consent may be considered).

Key points for completing the application form:

- ❖ Fill in the application form in consultation with your supervisor.
- ❖ Please ensure that you read all of the notes on the form thoroughly and answer all of the questions. Incorrectly completed forms will be returned. This may delay your research.
- ❖ You must not contact participants until you have received written confirmation (by email) that your application has been approved.
- ❖ The start date of your project must be at least three weeks after you submit the application. (Please note: due to the large number of applications we receive, it usually takes at least three weeks to receive approval for your research). Early applications are encouraged.
- ❖ Ask your supervisor to approve and sign the form. You must also sign it yourself. Signatures must be original (wet ink) or electronic copies of original signatures (i.e. not typed).
- ❖ Email your completed form in **MS Word** or .pdf format (with all relevant attachments: consent form, participant information sheet, research proposal and recruitment materials) to the EBS Research Administrator: Sarah Calver (email: ebresad@essex.ac.uk).
- ❖ Submit a signed paper copy of your form, along with all attachments (no staples please) to the relevant Administrator:

Postgraduate:

- Colchester – Jade D'Mello, via the student services desk in EBS
- Southend – Liz Frazer, EBS Enquiry Desk (third floor)

Undergraduate:

- Southend – Deborah McColgan, EBS Enquiry Desk (third floor)

- ❖ You will receive an email once your application has been approved and signed by the Ethics Officer.

Please read the following pages for essential information to help you correctly complete the ethical approval application form. Good luck with your research!

How to complete the Application for Ethical Approval form

The approval form must be completed accurately in order to receive University approval for your research. Please follow the guidelines below in order for your application to be approved quickly.

If your form is returned to you, you should re-read the information below and/or ask your supervisor for advice.

Guidelines:

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Question 4: Please state an exact date.

This date should be no later than when you first expect to contact your participants and at least three weeks after you plan to submit the form.

Question 5: Provide an exact number of days, weeks or months.

Question 7: Only answer this question if you have answered 'Yes' to Question 6.

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Question 8: Don't forget to answer this question.

Don't forget to sign your form and get your form signed by your supervisor. Signatures must be original (wet ink) or electronic copies of original signatures. **Typed signatures are not acceptable.**

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Question 1:

- Use everyday language (free from theory and jargon)
- Include a brief summary of the method and a justification for the importance of the research.
- **Provide enough information about how your research will be carried out to allow the Ethics Officer to make a decision about how ethical your research is.**

For example: What will you be asking your participants to do? What sort of things will you be asking them about (e.g. favourite colour, sexual orientation, salary)? How will you be asking them (e.g. by email, phone call, face-to-face)?

Question 2: If the answer to this is 'No' then you probably do not require ethical approval (e.g. If you are only using anonymised secondary data or documents which are available to the public).

Question 3: Who will be your participants (e.g. customers, managers, employees, children)?

Question 4: How will you contact them initially (e.g. email, social media, personal contacts)?

Don't forget to include copies of your recruitment materials (e.g. sample recruitment email).

Question 5: If the answer to this is 'Yes' then you must also answer the subsequent question in the box underneath (providing details of how any participants will be paid or reimbursed).

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Question 6: If you plan to conduct research with vulnerable individuals (e.g. Children) please contact the ethics officer prior to submitting your application for further advice.

If your research participants are any of the following, they may feel obliged to take part in the research. You should acknowledge this and explain what you will do to ensure that they are taking part voluntarily – see **appendix A** for advice on how you might do this:

1. You are collecting your data from a case study/organisation which is owned by a member of your family (e.g. parent, sibling, other close relative)
2. A relative or friend is enabling you to get access to an organisation either by distributing your questionnaire, arranging interviews, or introducing you to potential participants
3. You are using snowball sampling starting from your friends or family members
4. You will recruit your participants using your personal network or social media profiles

Question 7: Make sure you answer all of the questions in this box.

- You must also read the REO guidelines and then tick the 'Yes' box underneath this question.
- You must include a copy of any consent form, online questionnaire or participant information sheet that you intend to use with your application form.
- You will be expected to obtain consent from your participants in almost all cases. If you are not obtaining consent, it is advisable to contact the Ethics Officer for advice before submitting your application.
- In general, consent should be obtained by asking your participants to sign a written consent form. There is an exception to this is if you are using an online questionnaire. In certain exceptional circumstances, you may be able to obtain oral consent. **Please refer to the informed consent appendix B for details.**

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Question 8: If you collect participants' names, contact details or any details of their personal experiences (e.g. how is your relationship with your boss?) then this counts as personal data.

- Ensure that any details you give here are consistent with the details on your consent form and information sheet.
- The participant has the right to withdraw from your study at any stage. You therefore need to be able to identify which data came from which participant. This will normally require you to keep a list of participant names and a key to enable you to link any anonymised data to those names.
- You should explain how and at what stage any personal data will be anonymised (e.g. by using pseudonyms or participant numbers).

Question 9: You must answer both parts of this question.

For example, will you store data electronically or hard copies? Where will you keep it? Will it be secured in a locked room/cabinet, or password protected on a computer? Who will have access to the data?

Questions 10 and 11: You must answer these questions. Make sure you read the guidelines and then tick the boxes.

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Questions 12, 13 and 14: These questions are all about risk and must be answered.

- Physical, Legal or Economic risks are unlikely for most EBS student projects. Psychological or Social risks might include questioning participants on *sensitive* or potentially *emotional* issues (e.g. “tell me about a time when you were upset at work?”). It may also include asking participants to share personal information in front of others (e.g. focus groups).
- Are there any risks to yourself? (E.g. Do you need to travel to a dangerous place to conduct interviews?)
- You must explain how you will minimise and/or manage any risks which you describe.

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Question 15: You may leave this box blank if there are no other ethical issues to note.

Appendix A: Research using your family, friends and personal contacts

One of the key principles of ethical research is that research participants must take part voluntarily and feel free from coercion. Coercion is the action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats. More subtly, participants who are potentially dependant or feel obligated in some way to the researcher might be considered vulnerable. In this case willingness to participate may be influenced by familial or social (peer) pressure to 'help' you in your research.

If your research participants are any of the following, this may apply to you:

1. You are collecting your data from a case study/organisation which is owned by a member of your family (e.g. parent, sibling, other close relative)
2. A relative or friend is enabling you to get access to an organisation either by distributing your questionnaire, arranging interviews, or introducing you to potential participants
3. You are using snowball sampling starting from your friends or family members
4. You will recruit your participants using your personal network or social media profiles

What should you do if this applies to you?

If any of the above scenarios occur in your research then there is a possibility that your participants could feel pressured or obliged to take part in your research. **You must acknowledge this in your answer to question 6b – “could participants be considered to feel obliged to take part in the research”.** You must then outline in the comment box why it is necessary that these individuals must be your participants (these could be theoretical or practical reasons) and **explain what you will do to ensure that their consent is given without coercion** – some suggestions are given below.

In designing your study you must take measures to ensure that participants are comfortable and understand their rights, much of this is good ethical practice anyway but it becomes even more important when participants could feel obliged to take part.

1. You are collecting your data from a case study/organisation which is owned by a member of your family (e.g. parent, sibling, other close relative)

OR

2. A relative or friend is enabling you to get access to an organisation either by distributing your questionnaire, arranging interviews, or introducing you to potential participants

- Where possible, contact participants independently rather than having interviews arranged on your behalf or being introduced by a personal contact or family member.
- If an arranged introduction cannot be avoided, ensure that you follow up the introduction with an invitation from you personally.
- Attach a copy of any invitation or recruitment email used to elicit survey responses or conduct interviews. The invitation must explain that participation is voluntary.
- It is especially important that your participants understand their rights as a participant and how the data will be used. See [Appendix B](#) for details about informed consent – written consent is preferable.
- You should also use a participant information sheet given to the participant prior to giving consent (possibly with the recruitment email) which they can keep for their own reference. Ensure that this emphasises:
 - Your independence as a researcher (i.e. that the data you collect will not be used by the organisation but only for your student project).
 - How data will be anonymised and remain confidential
 - Who will have access to the data
 - If a report will be made to the company what form will that take and how will data be shown

- Contact details for you, your supervisor and also the EBS Ethics Officer, in case the participant has cause for complaint. You should not include contact details for the lead contact and you must ensure that participants are able to contact someone at the University (e.g. your supervisor) without you or your family member knowing.

3. You are using snowball sampling starting from your friends or family members

OR

4. You will recruit your participants using your personal network or social media profiles

- Attach a copy of any invitation or recruitment email used to elicit survey responses or conduct interviews. The invitation must explain that participation is voluntary.
- It is especially important that your participants understand their rights as a participant and how the data will be used. See [Appendix B](#) for details about informed consent – written consent is preferable.
 - Where the data collection is an online survey, you should use the first page of the survey to explain the participant's rights so that this cannot become lost during snowballing.
- You should also use a participant information sheet given to the participant prior to giving consent (possibly with the recruitment email or downloadable via an hyper link on the survey page) which they can keep for their own reference. Ensure that this emphasises:
 - Your independence as a researcher (i.e. that the data you collect will not be used by the organisation but only for your student project).
 - How data will be anonymised and remain confidential
 - Who will have access to the data
 - If a report will be made to the company what form will that take and how will data be shown
 - Contact details for you, your supervisor and also the EBS Ethics Officer, in case the participant has cause for complaint. You should not include contact details for the lead contact and you must ensure that participants are able to contact someone at the University (e.g. your supervisor) without you or your family member knowing.

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Participation is voluntary and prospective participants must have all the information to make an informed choice about their involvement. This is informed consent.

1. **Written Consent Form:** Confirms the understanding and agreement of the participant. See [template 1 for interviews](#) and [template 2 for hard-copy questionnaires](#) which you can adapt for your project.

A **Participant Information Sheet** which informs participants of what participation will involve and their rights should be given in advance and the participant keeps a copy for their reference. See [template 5](#) for an example which you can adapt for your project.

A written consent form must:

- Be written in plain language (free from jargon and acronyms)
- Be printed on headed paper, identifying the University as the responsible institution and the department to which the research is linked.
- Give the title of the research project, together with your name and contact details, as well as those of your supervisor.
- Be signed at the time of data collection. The participant should be asked to sign a statement covering the following (there may be other statements depending on the type of research):
 - i) The participant agrees to participate in this research.
 - ii) This agreement has been given voluntarily and without coercion.
 - iii) The participant has been given full information about the study in the form of a participant information sheet and contact details of the researcher(s).
 - iv) The participant understands that they can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving reasons and without penalty.
 - v) Details relating to anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided and the participants understanding of these.
 - vi) The participant has had the opportunity to ask any questions.
- Participants should be given a copy of the consent form to keep.

2. **Online Questionnaires:** Consent may be assumed on submission of the questionnaire.

If you are using an online questionnaire:

- Before any questions are asked, you should present a page with the same format and information as a consent form. (Please submit this front page with your application)
- However, the participant does not need to sign the statement. Instead, there should be a sentence to indicate that submitting responses to the questionnaire will be taken as implied acceptance of the statement above.
- This sentence should be repeated at the end of the questionnaire before the participant finally submits their responses.
- A template ([Template 3](#)) is provided which you can adapt and submit as an example with your application form.

3. **Oral Consent:** May be used where a participant cannot physically sign (e.g. telephone interview).

If you are obtaining oral consent:

- You must explain why you are unable to obtain written consent.
- Oral consent should be audio recorded where possible (exceptions can occasionally be made on grounds of cultural sensitivity, you must explain if this is the case).
- Explain in your application form what information you will convey to your participant orally. (You should submit a 'script for oral consent' – see [template 4](#) for an example which you adapt to meet your needs.)
- You must also give the Participant an Information Sheet, (see [template 5](#) for an example which you can adapt to your needs). The participant information sheet serves as a record for the participant should they need to review the information you have given them. It should include

contact details for you and your supervisor in case the participant later has questions or wishes to complain.