

Research ethics review in a nutshell!

Ethics review is required for any study involving:

- Interviews, surveys, focus groups, experiments, observations of people, etc.
- User generated data (e.g. from discussion forums, social media, vlogs, blogs, comments on posts or articles)
- The collection or use of any personal data/identifiable information (e.g. names, email addresses, IP addresses, social media profiles or meta-data, visual material, etc.)¹
- Any other information that could identify a living individual (or potentially lead to their identification) (For example: where information from micro datasets, if combined, could lead to the identification of individuals; where an online search for particular wording could lead to the identification of an individual)
- If findings/conclusions/publication could have damaging repercussions for any individuals (reputation, stigma, bullying) or groups with protected characteristics
- Any other reason why the research might raise ethical issues

You must obtain approval of your ethics review **before you commence any data collection.**

How to complete your ethics review online

1. Read the instructions on the [LSE Research Ethics Submission System webpages](#)
2. Complete the ethics review form using the link for researchers (student or staff)
3. Top tips: - reflect on the questions and answer honestly
- discuss any questions or concerns with your project supervisor or mentor before submitting

Approval of your ethics review – Two paths (see Flowchart on p.2)

1. Departmental review
2. Research Ethics Committee (REC) review

Check our [Research Ethics webpages](#) for information about key ethical considerations for your research and ethics review application including:

- **Informed consent** – see our guide on seeking consent, and templates for information sheets and consent forms
- Use of **publicly available data** – understand why *legal* use is not the same as *ethical* use
- Use of **social media data** - see our guidance on ethics and consent
- Other guidance, including on **conducting research online and overseas**

Questions? Contact us! LSE Research Ethics team: research.ethics@lse.ac.uk

¹ Research that will only use data from publicly available archival records (including newspapers) does not require ethics review (unless there are other reasons why it may give rise to ethical issues).

Flowchart: Ethics review process (students)

Read the instructions on the [Research Ethics Submission webpage](#)



Complete the ethics review form online
using the link for researchers (student or staff)

Your application form will be automatically categorized for either
Departmental review or **REC review**



DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

Your project supervisor automatically receives your ethics form and will review it. If they have questions for you to respond to, you will receive an email notification and will need to log in, address the questions and re-submit.

Once your project supervisor is happy with your form they will **Approve it, OR...**
...If it has been categorized for REC review they will **submit it to the REC***



APPROVED
(unless your form has been categorized for REC review*)



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC) REVIEW

REC review/approval is required **for any MSc dissertations or PhD theses** that:

- Involve vulnerable groups, children and young people, or sensitive topics
- Involve deception of participants, or involve withholding key details about the study
- Might have negative repercussions for any individuals or groups
- Will not obtain consent in writing/electronically **
- Involve any risks (emotional, physical or reputational) to either the participants or the researcher(s)

If your research involves any of the above, your **project supervisor will submit** your ethics form to the REC.

If the REC have questions for you to respond to, you will receive an email notification; you will need to respond to the questions and re-submit the form.

REC approval typically takes **up to 4 weeks after** it has been submitted to the REC by your supervisor/mentor. You will be notified when your application is approved.



APPROVED

Please regularly check the progress of your application via <https://portal.lse.ac.uk/myresearch/login>

You cannot begin data collection until you have received approval via the online ethics system.

Questions? Contact us! LSE Research Ethics team: research.ethics@lse.ac.uk

* MSc student projects which are **not** for dissertations, and **all** undergraduate projects, are exempted from REC review, unless the supervisor has concerns and opts to refer the application to the REC.

** This does not apply to researchers in Anthropology.