Policy Title	HE Research Ethics Policy
Policy Category	Compliant
Owner	Director of Higher Education, NCG
Group Executive Lead	Executive Director, Governance, Assurance and Risk,NCG
Date Written	28/09/2023
Considered By	Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee
Approved By	NCG HE Academic Board
Date Approved	September 2023
Equality Impact Assessment	The implementation of this policy is not considered tohave a negative impact on protected characteristics
Freedom of Information	This document will be publicly available through theGroup's Publication Scheme.
Review Date	June 2026
Policy Summary	All academic activity at NCG should be conducted according to good ethical practice and with the highest standards of integrity. The purpose of this policy is to articulate the NCG approach to the scrutiny and approvalof research ethics, predominantly across our HE provision. This is aligned with our institutional commitment to maintain robust research governance processes.

Applicability of Policy	Consultation Undertaken	Applicable To
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form	No	No
Carlisle	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster	Yes	Yes
Lewisham	No	No
Southwark	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire	Yes	Yes
Group Services	Yes	No
HE Partnerships (*partner may have an equivalent policy)	No	Yes

Changes to Earlier Versions	
Previous ApprovalDate 9 June 2016	Summarise Changes Made HerePart of routine schedule of policy updating. Not currently applicable to Lewisham College but thismay change in the future. Updates reflect additional colleges merging with NCG since last policy review and other institutional structuralchanges. Terminology has been updated to reflect current use. References to external advisory documents andframeworks have been updated.

Linked Documents	
Document Title	Relevance
NCG Research EthicsFramework	Contains guidance and resources to support policyimplementation
NCG InformationPolicy	GDPR compliance

Equality Impact Assessment

	Judgement
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in 2.0?	Yes
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?	
Age	No
Disability / Difficulty	No
Gender Reassignment	No
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
Race	No
Religion or Belief	No
Sex	No
Sexual Orientation	No
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	No
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	No
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	No
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	No
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	Consultation has been carried out with relevant colleagues within NCG and with a higher education (HE) committee within our HE deliberative structure, which includes HE student representation.

Scope and Purpose of Policy

All academic activity at NCG should be conducted according to good ethical practice and with the highest standards of integrity. The purpose of this policy is to articulate the NCG approach to the scrutiny and approval of research ethics, predominantly across our HE provision. This is aligned with our institutional commitment to maintain robust research governance processes.

3.2 This policy applies to staff undertaking research projects and HE students undertaking research either for the purpose of completing a dissertation or on an extracurricular basis.

3.3 It may also apply to other individuals conducting research on behalf of NCG or using NCGresources and facilities.

3.4 The scope of this policy includes creative products and performances, as well as projectsresulting in written outputs. Where dissertations are linked to a practical project, the latter willalso be subject to ethical review. The scrutiny of research proposals should also consider funding, external partnerships and potential dissemination.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Research ethics can be defined as the moral principles which influence each stage of the research process, from conception through to dissemination. Ethical scrutiny involves making a judgement that the potential risks of the proposed project do not outweigh the perceived benefits. Risk management is integral to this process.

4.2 NCG is committed to upholding six key principles outlined in the ESRC *Framework for Research Ethics* (2018[AB1]):

4.2.1 Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm.

4.2.2 The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected.

4.2.3 Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed.

4.2.4 Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency.

4.2.5 Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.

4.2.6 Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.

4.3 In addition to these core principles, a number of additional points are worthy of note and indicative of acceptable practice:

4.3.1 Ethical review should always be proportionate to the potential risk.

4.3.2 The dignity and autonomy of research participants should be respected and protected at all times.

4.3.3 Research proposals must always take into account relevant statutory, regulatory, professional and legal requirements.

4.3.4 Responsibility for the conduct of research rests with the researcher and the institution through the research governance structure and procedures.

4.4 All HE staff and students likely to supervise or undertake research projects are expected to have a working knowledge of the NCG Research Ethics Framework.

4.5 All individuals intending to submit a proposal for ethical scrutiny must have completed the NCG research ethics training session, which forms part of the HE Training and Development Framework.

4.6 Ethical scrutiny is composed of two levels of approval, namely stage one or stage two, depending upon the nature of the proposal. The criteria for each stage are outlined in the NCG Research Ethics Framework.

4.7 Whilst the ethical scrutiny process is managed at local level by the College Ethics Committees, oversight ultimately rests with the NCG Research Ethics Committee which operates at Group level. The terms of reference for each form of committee areoutlined in the NCG Research Ethics Framework.

NCG RESEARCH ETHICS PROCEDURE
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Rationale

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to support the implementation of the NCG Research Ethics Policy. This document will provide information and guidance for management, teaching staff and students on how to ensure they adhere to the NCG Research Ethics Policy. The development of the NCG Research Ethics Policy and this Framework have been informed by the ESRC *Framework for Research Ethics* (ESRC, 2016).

The institution is committed to upholding the six key principles outlined in the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics:

1. Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm.
2. The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
3. Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
4. Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
5. Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
6. Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.

NCG, Research Ethics Committees and individual researchers should consider ethics issues throughout the lifecycle of a research project and promote a culture of ethical reflection, debate and mutual learning. The lifecycle of research includes the planning and research design stage, the period of funding for the project, and all activities that relate to the project up to – and including – the time when funding has ended. This includes knowledge exchange and impact activities, the dissemination process – including reporting and publication – and the archiving, future use, sharing and linking of data (ESRC, 2016).

The institution prioritises the promotion of research and scholarship conducted by staff and students, as part of our Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) and future direction of our HE provision. In this context, the importance of research integrity through providing a robust system of research governance is of critical importance. The institution is committed to implementing the recommendations of *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (UUK, 2019) and the *RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct* (RCUK, 2017).

Definitions

Our shared understanding of research and scholarship is defined within our HE Strategy. The institution has adopted Boyer's model of scholarship as the most appropriate representation of our approach to RSA.

The *REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions* defines research as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared'. This includes projects undertaken to address the needs of employers, industry and voluntary organisations.

It also covers projects which cannot be disseminated widely due to issues of commercial sensitivity.

Scholarship is defined by the *REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions* as 'the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines'. This may involve staff members increasing their subject or pedagogical knowledge. Scholarly activity is distinguished from CPD activity by a broader impact beyond the individual, through dissemination to peers and students.

Research ethics can be defined as the moral principles which influence each stage of the research process, from conception through to dissemination. Ethical scrutiny involves making a judgement that the potential risks of the proposed project do not outweigh the perceived benefits. Risk management is therefore integral to this process.

For the sake of convenience, the term 'project' is used in this document to refer to any research related activity.

Scope

The framework detailed outlined in the following pages apply to the following:

- Management staff overseeing research ethics.
- Staff undertaking research projects.
- Staff supervising student research projects.
- Students undertaking research projects either for the purpose of completing a dissertation as part of their academic course of study or on an extracurricular basis.
- Other individuals conducting research on behalf of the institution or using NCG resources or facilities.

The scope of this document includes creative products and performances, as well as projects resulting in written outputs. Where dissertations are linked to a practical project, the latter will also be subject to ethical review. Ethical scrutiny must also consider the funding, external relationships and potential dissemination of any proposed project.

Institutional responsibilities

The institution has the following responsibilities:

1. Overseeing the implementation of the institutional ethics policy and framework.
2. Reviewing ethics policy and framework in light of legislative changes and sector wide best practice.
3. Establish and publish working practices and clear, transparent and effective procedures for ethics review and monitoring of research.

4. Providing appropriate training and guidance for staff, students and Committee members.

Independent advice

It is anticipated that circumstances may arise in which the College Ethics Committee (CEC) or institutional Research Ethics Committee (REC) will require independent advice in order to reach an informed decision. In these circumstances, the Chair of the CEC will refer the project to the REC, explaining why external consultation is required. The Chair of the REC will arrange for consultation with an appropriately qualified or experienced external expert.

Projects exempt from ethical scrutiny

The following types of activity are not considered to fall within the remit of ethical scrutiny according to the guidelines issued by the ESRC:

- Routine audits
- Performance reviews
- Quality assurance studies
- Testing conducted within normal educational requirements
- Literary or artistic criticism

In cases of doubt, projects should be presented for ethical approval through the relevant CEC.

Referral to the REC

Projects should be referred to the REC in the following circumstances:

- The CEC is unable to reach a decision on the proposed project.
- The CEC feels inadequately qualified to grant ethical approval.
- External consultation is required before the project can be considered.
- The scope of the proposed project is outside of the remit of the CEC.

The Chair of the CEC is responsible for referring the project to the REC and may be asked to attend the relevant meeting. The Chair of the CEC must inform the researcher of the decision to refer their project to the REC for consideration.

Considering Ethical Approval

The ESRC ethics principles outlined above provide the basis for reviewing research proposals. Ethical scrutiny is not intended to review the quality or scholarly merits of the proposed research, nor should it be used to approve dissertation topics. It is expected that these aspects will already have been reviewed prior to submission and appropriate documentation will support the application for ethical approval. The ethical approval process is designed to assure the safety of researchers, participants,

bystanders and the institution, within reasonable parameters. The process should be viewed as constructive and supportive.

Projects should be carefully considered in light of the potential ethical issues they raise, and the steps with have been taken to minimise or address them. Projects need not be completely free of ethical issues to gain approval, as long as the researcher has assured the CEC or REC of an appropriate response through adjustments to the design or operation of their project.

Given the nature of ethical scrutiny, debate is to be encouraged within the CECs and REC. Ultimately the Chair of the respective committee is responsible for the decision to grant or decline ethical approval in consultation with their colleagues and, where appropriate, external experts.

Ethical Scrutiny Outcomes

There are five potential outcomes of the scrutiny process:

Outcome	Meaning
Approved	The project may commence
Provisional Approval	Approval granted subject to approval from other ethics bodies (e.g. NHS, other institutions etc.). Research may not commence until approval has been received from all other required bodies. The Chair of the CEC must be informed of the outcomes of external ethical approval processes which will be recorded through Chair's Action.
Approved subject to amendments	The project may commence after certain amendments have been made. The completion of these amendments must be confirmed by the researcher to the Chair of the CEC within one week.
Referred	Project passed to a higher committee for scrutiny, usually the REC.
Declined	Project refused ethical approval. In this instance, feedback will be provided to the researcher explaining the reasoning behind this decision. The researcher may have recourse to appeal, if necessary.

Research Integrity

The institution prides itself on the quality of research conducted by its staff and students. To safeguard this quality, the institution is committed to implementing the recommendations of '*The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*' (UUK, 2019)

https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf and the '*RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct'* (RCUK, 2017). https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/reviews/grc/rcuk-grp-policy-and-guidelines-updated-apr-17-2-pdf/

The core elements of research integrity defined in these documents are:

- Honesty
- Rigour
- Transparency and open communication
- Care and respect

Researchers are required to maintain the integrity throughout all stages of their research from planning to dissemination. Our expectations of researchers are outlined clearly in Appendix 3.

In alignment with the *Concordat*, the institution is committed to:

1. Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.
2. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.
3. Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.
4. Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.
5. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and the reviewing process regularly and openly.

It is expected that the college nominee will take a leading role in overseeing their individual college's commitment to maintaining the integrity of research conduct by staff and students

Emerging areas of research

Paradigm shifts are integral to the development of scholarship. It is anticipated that the scope of research conducted within the institution may shift radically over the coming years, particularly in terms of developments in industries linked to science, technology and engineering. For this reason, the membership of both the CECs and REC should reflect the changing nature of scholarly activity through the inclusion of some individuals with specialist knowledge and understanding of emerging areas of research. With the consent of the relevant committee, membership may be revised to reflect developments within the discipline/s.

Data Protection

Researchers should be conversant with the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and associated GDPR requirements in the storage and use of data collected during their research. Staff members are required to complete an online training package in information processing and security, including the Data Protection Act, as part of their mandatory training. Students will receive training in the requirements of the Data Protection Act as part of their training in research ethics and integrity. Researchers requiring further training or support with regard to data protection should contact the Chair of their CEC in the first instance.

Record keeping

Records of research projects and the ethical approval process are required for future audit purposes. Copies of Research Ethical Approval Forms, associated documents and minutes from the CECs and REC should be stored electronically for a five year period. With the exception of the REC minutes, the CECs are responsible for the secure storage of all documents relating to the ethical approval process.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

Certain projects, particularly those involving vulnerable groups, will require a DBS check. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that they have obtained the necessary DBS clearance prior to commencing their research. The CEC is obliged to retain a record of their DBS number for future audit purposes.

Multi-institutional projects

Where projects are to be undertaken as collaborative endeavours with other institutions, it is expected that ethical approval should be sought from all of the participating institutions. If ethical approval has been received from another institution, the relevant documentation may be submitted to support the application for internal ethical approval, at the discretion of the Chair of the CEC.

NHS research

Projects will fall under the remit of the NHS National Research Ethics Service (NRES) if they contain any of the following:

- A clinical trial of a medicinal product
- A clinical investigation of a non-CE Marked medical device, or a CE Marked device which is being used/modified beyond its original function or purpose
- Exposure to ionising radiation
- Intrusive procedures with adults who lack the capacity to provide consent for themselves, or who are retained as participants following loss of capacity

- Storage of material from living or deceased on premises without a storage licence from the Human Tissue Authority
- Storage or use of relevant material from the living (including DNA analysis), collected on or after 1 September 2006, if the research is not within the terms of consent for research from donors/participants
- Access to, or the processing of, confidential information about patients or service users by researchers outside of the care team without consent
- Processing of disclosable protected information on the Register of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority without consent
- Residents or information from residents at a residential care or nursing home
- A clinical trial involving practising midwives
- Research participants identified from, or because of, their past or present use of services for which the UK Health Departments are responsible (including services provided under contract with the private or voluntary sectors) including participants recruited through these services as controls
- Carers or relatives of users of the above as research participants
- Collection of tissue or information of users of these services, including those who have died within the past century
- Use of previously collected tissue or information which would allow researchers to identify users of these services
- Health-related research involving prisoners
- Xenotransplantation (transferring living tissue, organs or cells from animals to people)
- Funding from the Department of Health

This list is not exhaustive and researchers are encouraged to consult the NRES website for the full list of criteria.

If a project requires NRES approval, researchers must first obtain institutional ethical approval. Research may only commence after approval has been obtained from the institution, NRES and other applicable bodies (e.g. the NHS Trust).

International research

In the case of research conducted outside of the UK, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ascertain whether local ethics review is required by the host country. The institutional ethical approval submission should assure the relevant committee that this has been investigated. It is expected that researchers working outside of the UK will abide by the principles of ethical conduct and research integrity outlined in this document at all times. All international research partnerships are subject to approval by the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

Funding

Funding received from outside of the institution will also form a component of the ethical review process. This is to ensure that the source of such funding is appropriate. Researchers must provide full details of all external funding sources within their ethical review submission.

Dissemination

The dissemination of research potentially has ethical implications. Researchers must consider how they will protect the rights and privacy of participants through the dissemination of their findings. Participants should be made aware of how the research will be communicated to a broad audience prior to giving their informed consent. The CECs and REC must be assured by researchers that their plans for dissemination uphold the principles of ethical conduct and research integrity outlined in this document.

Conflicts of interest

Minimising potential conflicts of interest is essential for maintaining the integrity of our research. No individual should play a role or be present during the consideration of a project in which they have a potential conflict of interest. At all times, the actions of members of the CECs and REC must be transparent and fair. Individuals who fail to declare a potential conflict of interest in a timely manner may be subject to potential research misconduct proceedings.

Ongoing review

It is to be expected that the nature of research projects may change significantly during their operational phase. Researchers should not avoid deviating from their original proposal in order to pursue their findings further. However, they should consider their ethical obligations before doing so. In the case any changes to a research project, it is the responsibility of the researcher to inform either their supervisor (for student dissertation projects) or the Chair of their CEC of the nature and causes of the changes. This may require a new ethical review submission to the appropriate authority, depending on the scale of the adjustments to the original project.

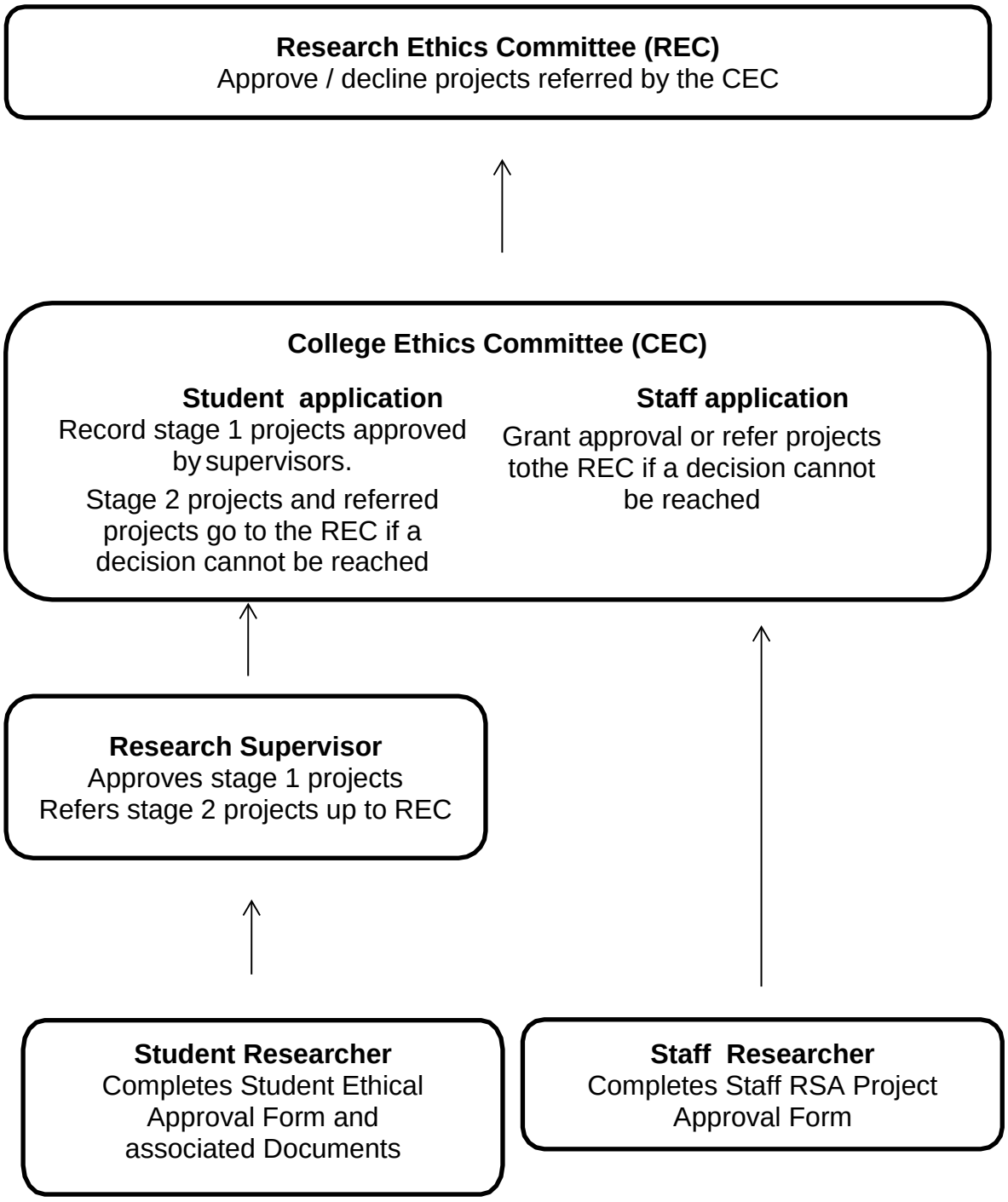
Resources

The most up to date copies of the NCG Research Ethics Policy, Framework, training materials and research ethics application forms can be downloaded from the Research Ethics section of RSA Hub. Resources will be reviewed on an annual basis so please ensure you have the most up to date versions at the beginning of each academic year.

Ethical approval process

The research ethics process consists of three levels of scrutiny. This structure is designed to present a streamlined approach to the ethical approval process, whilst also providing avenues for appeals and referrals for challenging cases. The purpose of the ethical approval process is not to limit avenues of enquiry, but rather to offer support to researchers from across the institution.

The following diagram outlines the approval process:



Guidance for Students

Prior to embarking on a research project as a student at the college you are required to:

- Undertake research ethics training (this will be provided as part of your taught degree programme)
- Develop a research proposal or equivalent
- Submit a completed Student Ethical Approval Form to your tutor and all associated documents
- Receive written confirmation that you can proceed with your project from your tutor or College Ethics Committee

You are also required resubmit your Student Ethical Approval Form if your project changes at any point. If your research does alter in any way you must obtain further ethical approval in writing before proceeding.

Guidance for Research Supervisors

All L6 and L7 projects conducted by students require ethical approval. As a research supervisor you must decide if student projects are stage 1 (something you can approve) or a project that requires REC approval. If you have any concerns about the content/methodology of a project we recommend that the project is referred to the REC for approval. The criteria for this are detailed in Appendix A. Once a decision has been made you must fill out your section of the Student Ethical Approval Form and submit it to the Ethics Committee along with yourcompleted Ethical Approval Record Spreadsheet. You will be required to attend the REC to present any stage 2 applications you have approved and provide an overview of any stage 1 applications.

Once College Ethics Committee has taken place students must be contacted in writing (letter or email) to notify them of the outcome of their application. It is up to the individual College Ethics Committee who communicates this information and in what format. However, a copy of this communication must be stored alongside the completed Student Ethical Approval Form for auditing purposes.

It is common for students to alter their research. When this occurs Research Supervisors must ensure students resubmit their projects for ethical approval before proceeding with their research.

A copy of all for the forms and training materials mentioned above can be downloaded from the Research Ethics section of RSA Hub.

Guidance for Staff Researchers

Staff wishing to conduct research are required to complete and submit a Staff RSA Project Approval Form to their College Ethics committee for approval. Prior to submission staff should ensure the project is supported by their line manager ,

aligned with College development priorities and that the appropriate resources are available.

Guidance for College Ethics Committee (CEC)

Each College with HE provision is required to host College Ethics Committees. The purpose of the CEC is to record projects which have been awarded Stage 1 approval and assess projects which require Stage 2 approval. Prior to the committee the Chair must contact all Research Supervisors to request all completed (stage 1 and stage 2) Student Ethical Approval Forms and a completed Ethical Approval Record Spreadsheet and all relevant documents All forms are received and stored centrally by the REC for auditing purposes.

Once stage 1 applications have been submitted to the CEC and stage 2 applications have been assessed and approved at the REC students must be sent written confirmation. It is up to the College Ethics Committee if this is to be done centrally by the committee administrator or by tutors themselves. However a copy of this communication must be stored alongside the completed Student Ethical Approval Form for auditing purposes.

Applications the CEC are unable to make a decision on should be referred to the REC for approval. A cautious approach should be exercised at all levels of the ethical approval process meaning that projects should always be referred if there is any element of doubt concerning their eligibility for approval.

The CEC membership will comprise of the following:

- Chair
- Members of staff who have undertaken mandatory Staff Core Research Ethics Training
- At least one HE student representative

In practice the CEC should include staff with appropriate subject knowledge to ensure that robust decisions are made.
It is up to the Chair of the CEC to ensure committees are scheduled frequently enough and at appropriate times throughout the academic year as to deal with student demand.

Feedback

Students are required to receive feedback within 30 working days of official submission to research supervisor and 20 days following any submissions to the REC. In this instance, feedback is defined as formal notification of a decision on ethical approval or referral to a higher authority. Researchers should be informed in writing of the outcome of each stage of the approval process, including referral to another committee. In cases where feedback may exceed the given timescale (e.g. whilst

awaiting advice from an external source) the researcher should be informed of the nature and expected length of the delay.

REC & CEC Standard Agenda & Terms of Reference

The Ethics Committee will meet a minimum of once in each academic year. It will discuss issues relevant to its terms of reference:

AGENDA

1. Attendance
2. Apologies
3. Conflicts of interest
4. Confidentiality of proceedings
5. Terms of Reference
6. Awarding Bodies Ethics Policy
7. Presentation of Ethics Queries
8. Any Other Business
9. Collection of confidential papers by Officer

Terms of Reference

The Ethics Committee will meet a minimum of once in each academic year. It will discuss issues relevant to its terms of reference:

1. To consider all ethical issues arising in relation to the conduct of research in the College.

2. To provide an independent, just, competent and timely review and approval of the ethics of proposed research to ensure that the dignity, rights and well- being of all research participants are protected and take into account the interest, needs and safety of researchers;

3. To assess projects requiring review and monitor the conduct of the research which has received ethical approval until it is completed;

4. To receive reports on work in progress where appropriate

5. To report to Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee with matters that relate to the monitoring of outcomes and compliance with institutional quality assurance requirements.

6. To comply with relevant Awarding Body procedures

7. To consider all ethical issues arising in relation to the conduct of research in the College.

8. To provide an independent, just, competent and timely review and approval of the ethics of proposed research to ensure that the dignity, rights and well- being of all research participants are protected and take into account the interest, needs and safety of researchers;

9. To assess projects requiring review and monitor the conduct of the research which has received ethical approval until it is completed;

10. To receive reports on work in progress where appropriate

11. To report to Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee with matters that relate to the monitoring of outcomes and compliance with institutional quality assurance requirements.

12. To comply with relevant Awarding Body procedures

Audits

The institution may audit the ethical approval processes where necessary . In most instances,this will involve a check of relevant paperwork relating to the submission of the projectfor ethical approval, the procedures followed during the approval process and any changes made to the project during its operational phase. Feedback will also be solicited from the researcher on the quality and timeliness of the information they received during the ethical approval process. Researchers, supervisors and CECs have an obligation to respond to all requests made during an audit in a timely and efficient manner.

Where the REC has significant concerns about the ethics in the conduct of a project, a full and detailed account of the project may be requested for full ethical review.

Appeals

Researchers may appeal the decision made by a CEC/REC. It is considered best practice for researchers to attempt to resolve any issues with the Chair of the REC in the firstinstance.
The researcher will be required to explain the grounds for their appeal. The decision of the REC on appeals is final.

Complaints / Research misconduct

As part of our commitment to embedding the key principles of research integrity, the institution treats allegations of research misconduct extremely seriously. The Chair of the REC and the appropriate Directors should be notified in writing of any such allegations. It is envisaged that allegations of research misconduct will be investigated under the institutional disciplinary procedure. All research participants, researchers and other groups involved in research should be given contact details for the Chair of the REC and the appropriate Directors in case they should wish to make a complaint. No detriment will be attached to whistle-blowers who make allegations of research misconduct in good faith. The outcomes of any investigations into alleged research misconduct will be included within the REC annual report submitted to the HE Academic Board via the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

APPENDIX A: Stage 1 & 2 approval criteria

Criteria for Stage 1 approval

Projects which contain only a minimal risk for researchers, participants and bystanders can be granted Stage 1 approval by the supervisor (in the case of student projects) or the CEC (in all other cases).

Projects worthy of Stage 1 approval are normally identified through the Research Ethics Approval Form. Supervisors are required to report all projects granted Stage 1 approval to their CEC through the submission of the completed form and CEC Spreadsheet. Where supervisors are unsure whether Stage 1 approval is suitable, projects should be referred to the REC for Stage 2 approval.

Criteria for Stage 2 approval

In general, projects involving human participants and personal data should be submitted for Stage 2 approval. Following the guidelines issued by the ESRC, projects will require Stage 2 approval if they involve the following:

- Potentially vulnerable groups
- Individuals who lack capacity
- Sensitive topics
- Deceased persons, body parts or other human elements
- Administrative or secure data
- Groups where the permission of a gatekeeper (e.g. head teacher, care home manager) is normally required
- Deception or research conducted without the full and informed consent of participants
- Access to records of personal or sensitive confidential information
- Potential or actual psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation
- Intrusive interventions or data collection methods
- Significant risk to the safety of the researcher
- Members of the public in a data collection role
- Activities outside of the UK
- Respondents through the internet
- Visual images or vocal recordings where participants can be identified
- Data sharing of confidential information beyond the initial consent given
- Ethical approval through the NHS
- Partnership with other institutions or bodies
- External funding sources

APPENDIX B: The Research Integrity Concordat

Adapted from '*The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*' (UUK, 2019)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">1. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Staff will:

• Understand the expected standards of rigour andintegrity relevant to their research.
• Maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity intheir work at all times.</td><td>The institution will:

• Collaborate both internally and externally to maintain a research environment that develops good research practice and nurtures a culture of research integrity, as described in commitments 2 to 5.
• Support researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours, and defending them when they live up to these standards in difficult circumstances.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2. We are committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Staff will:

• Ensure that all research is subject to active andappropriate consideration of ethical issues.
• Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by</td><td>The institution will:

• Have clear policies on ethical approval available to all researchers.</td></tr>
</table>

statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers,funders and other relevant stakeholders.	• Make sure that all researchers are aware of and understand policies and processes relating to ethical approval. • Support researchers to reflect best practice in relation to ethical, legal and professional requirements. • Have appropriate arrangements in place through which researchers can access advice and guidance on ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards.
3. We are committed to supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based ongood governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers.	
The institution will: • Embed these features in our systems, processes and practices. • Work towards reflecting recognised best practice in our systems, processes and practices. • Implement the concordat within our research environment.	
4. We are committed to using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise.	
Staff will: • Act in good faith with regard to allegations of researchmisconduct, whether in making allegations or in beingrequired to participate in an investigation.	The institution will: • Have clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct.

• Handle potential instances of research misconduct inan appropriate manner; this includes reporting misconduct to employers, funders and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as circumstances require.	• Have robust, transparent and fair processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct that reflect bestpractice. • Ensure that all researchers are made aware of the relevant contacts and procedures for making allegations. • Act with no detriment to whistle-blowers making allegations of misconduct in good faith. • Provide information on investigations of research misconduct to funders of research and professional and/or statutory bodies as required by their conditionsof grant and other legal, professional and statutory obligations. • Support their researchers in providing appropriate information to professional and/or statutory bodies.
5. We are committed to working together to strengthen the integrity of research and the reviewing process regularly and openly.	