

# College of Arts, Humanities and Business

## Research Ethics Approval Procedures

Individuals are responsible for ensuring the maintenance of good practice in every aspect of their research. Please refer to the Guidelines and Policy Statements document for further information.

The College of Arts, Humanities and Business (CAHB) Research Ethics Committee is constituted as follows:

- It has at least seven members (minimum attendance for a quorum is five) with a pre-designated Chair
- It is multidisciplinary and has wide-ranging and diverse representation
- Its members cover all necessary experience in the areas of research regularly reviewed and with the confidence and esteem of the research community
- It is recommended that it includes at least one lay member from the local community (possessing the relevant skills and with no affiliation to the University for the last five years)
- It is desirable that it includes at least one student member

A member of the Registrar's Office with responsibility for ethics may attend. The Committee welcomes dialogue with researchers to ensure that ethical approval is granted.

The Committee meets twice a year but communicates electronically to expedite decisions.

### Who needs to submit an ethics application?

Any research activity that involves collecting primary data from human participants requires ethics approval from the College of Arts, Humanities and Business. This applies to all staff and students (undergraduate and postgraduate). If the project only uses publicly-available secondary data, i.e. data that has been collected by somebody else, it does NOT require ethics approval. Good examples are non-restricted internet resources, census data, documents from national archives, and corpora like CHILDES or TalkBank.

### Who issues ethics approval certificates?

The School's Ethics Officer is authorised by the College to issue school-internal approval certificates if the study meets the following criteria:

- The study does not involve children or vulnerable adults, or they are supervised by an authorised person (parent, guardian etc.) at all times during data collection.
- The study does not involve video recording
- The study does not involve deception of participants
- The study does not involve sensitive issues or data
- There is no potential harm to participants
- There are no other complications that involve specific consideration.

In all other cases, ethics approval is to be considered and issued by the College Research Ethics Committee. In the case of sensitive research, the proposal may need to be considered by the University's Sensitive Research Approval Group. Specific arrangements may be in place for individual Schools.

## **Information for student applicants**

The first step is to download the ethics application form from the CAHB Ethics website. Students should then meet with their supervisor (required for UG and PG students) in order to discuss the first draft of the application. Once the supervisor's comments have been integrated, students need to submit the application form and supplementary materials by email to the School's Ethics Officer, copying the supervisor in who should then confirm that they have read and agree with the proposal. The school's Ethics Officer will either consider the project at School level, or decide that the documents need to be submitted for further consideration to the College's Research Ethics Committee.

## **Information for staff applicants**

After completing the ethics application form, staff members should submit the application form and supplementary materials by email to the School's Ethics Officer, who will either consider the project at School level, or decide that the documents need to be submitted for further consideration to the College's Research Ethics Committee.

## **How to submit the application to the College's Research Ethics Committee**

Completed application forms and supporting documents (e.g., questionnaires, consent form, information sheets, DBS certificate etc.) should be sent to the CAHB Administrator (CAHBethics@bangor.ac.uk). The Administrator will also assist with any technical queries and retain an archive of submissions.

## **How long does it take to get a project approved?**

Obtaining approval at College level can take up to 4-6 weeks, especially when the study includes children, patients, etc. There will be further delays if the application is incomplete, lacks detail, or was submitted during vacation periods. In the case of sensitive projects that need to be considered at University level, the process can take even longer.

Research projects that represent only minimal risk to participants and can be approved at School level are usually processed significantly faster, and should normally be approved within 10 days.

## **Ethical Review Process**

In considering a research proposal the Research Ethics Committee will give particular consideration to the following criteria:

1. Does the research involve vulnerable groups – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship? Where it does, has the need for the study been satisfactorily motivated, and have appropriate measures been taken to prevent any harm from participants? Has a valid DBS certificate been included?\*
2. Does the research involve sensitive topics – for example participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status? In cases where it does, what steps have been taken to ensure that participants' privacy, dignity and other rights are safeguarded?

*\* DBS certificates remain valid for three years for the same purpose. In all cases validity needs to be confirmed by the current College DBS contact.*

3. Does the research involve deception, or is it conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out? Where that is the case the Research Ethics Committee will seek, among other things, clear evidence that (a) such research can only be conducted in this way and (b) every effort will be made to minimise potential psychological harm to the participants.
4. Does the research involve access to records of personal or confidential information, concerning identifiable individuals? If so, strict rules must be in place to ensure conformity to rules of privacy and the Data Protection Act.
5. Will the research induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation, or cause more than minimal pain?

### **Expedited Review**

Expedited review of research proposals is the norm within CAHB. The procedure is as follows:

1. Electronic versions of the Application and supporting documents are submitted to the appropriate Research Ethics Committee (School) representative
2. The School representative either approves the proposal directly, or asks for amendments, or advises that the College Research Ethics Committee needs to consider the proposal.
3. After having received the proposal, the Administrator (CAHBethics@bangor.ac.uk) circulates the documents to the Committee members for comments.
4. When a response has been agreed, a decision on the outcome of the review will be conveyed to the applicant by the Committee Chair.
5. A summary of expedited reviews will be reported to the Research Ethics Committee at its next meeting.
6. A periodic audit (normally annually) of the expedited review process will be carried out by the Research Ethics Committee.

### **Outcomes of the Ethical Review Process**

Three outcomes of the ethical review process are possible:

- The project is approved as it stands.
- The project is approved subject to specified alterations.
- The project is rejected.

Applicants will receive notice as soon as possible after a decision has been made telling them what the Research Ethics Committee has decided. Where appropriate, they will be given written advice on specific alterations required by the Research Ethics Committee before approval can be given for the research to start or reasons why the project has been rejected.

The following actions are then available to applicants:

1. Where the project is approved as it stands the applicant may proceed with the project.

2. Where the project is approved subject to specified alterations, the applicant will be invited to resubmit the application.

Please note: if a project is approved subject to specified alterations, applicants may **NOT** proceed to start the research until these changes have been approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

3. Where the project has been rejected, three options are possible.
  - a. If the applicant believes that they can address the reasons given for the rejection by the Research Ethics Committee, they may revise the research proposal accordingly and resubmit it as a new application.
  - b. If it is believed that the application may have been given an unfavourable opinion based on a misunderstanding of the research proposal, the applicant may make a written request to the Research Ethics Committee for it to reconsider the project. The applicant may also meet with the Research Ethics Committee, or designated members, to discuss the project.
  - c. If, following a. or b., the issue still cannot be resolved satisfactorily an appeal against the decision of the Research Ethics Committee may be made to the University Ethics Committee via the Head of College. However, it should be noted that the University Ethics Committee is concerned only with the general principles of natural justice, reasonableness and fairness of the decision made by the Research Ethics Committee and would not normally reverse a decision on other grounds.

## **Monitoring of research approved by the Research Ethics Committee**

### **1. Liaison between a Research Group and the Research Ethics Committee**

The research group will designate an individual (normally the lead researcher) to liaise with the Research Ethics Committee on behalf of the research group.

### **2. Commencement of the Research**

- a. It is assumed that the research will commence within 12 months of the Research Ethics Committee granting approval.
- b. Should the research not commence within 12 months the Research Ethics Committee should be given a written explanation for the delay. It is open to the Research Ethics Committee to allow a further period of 12 months within which the research must commence.
- c. Should the research not commence within 24 months, the approval will be suspended and the application would need to be resubmitted for ethical review.

### **3. Duration of ethical approval**

The approval for the research generally applies for the duration of the data collection period. The Research Ethics Committee should be notified if it is proposed to extend the duration of the study. It is understood that data analysis and publication may take longer; however, the Ethics Committee will need to be informed if data are stored longer than indicated in the proposal in the case of analysis or publication delay.

#### **4. Amendments**

- a. If it is proposed to make a substantial amendment to the research, the lead researcher should submit a notice of amendment to the Research Ethics Committee.
- b. A substantial amendment should not be implemented until approval has been given by the Research Ethics Committee. The committee will normally give an opinion within 30 days of receipt of the valid application for amendment.

#### **5. Review of approval**

- a. The Research Ethics Committee may review its opinion at any time in the light of any relevant information it receives.
- b. The lead researcher may at any time
  - i) request that the Research Ethics Committee reviews opinion, or
  - ii) seek advice from the Research Ethics Committee on any ethical issue relating to the research.

#### **6. Breach of approval conditions**

Failure to comply with these conditions may lead to suspension or termination of the approval by the Research Ethics Committee.