

ETHICS IN RESEARCH – SoMS HELP GUIDE

All research that involves the collection of data from or about living people must undergo ethics review **prior** to any data collection taking place.

As a **general** guide, if a researcher answers “Yes” to any of the questions below, ethics clearance has to be sought:

1. Is your research making use of human participants as a source of data?
2. Is there a possibility that your research could cause harm to a third party?
3. Does your research involve the participation of communities?
4. Is your research providing a service to a community?
5. Is there a potential conflict of interest?

Prior to your application...

Please read the **Ethics Policy** of the Faculty of Commerce; available here:

<https://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Downloads/Faculty%20Ethics%20in%20Research%20Policy.PDF>

and

Please read the **Ethics in Research Handbook** of the Faculty of Commerce; available here:

<https://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Downloads/Commerce%20Ethics%20in%20Research%20Handbook%20June%202018.pdf>

SELECT ONE OF TWO APPLICATION PROCESSES

IF YOU REQUIRE ETHICAL CLEARANCE THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT APPLICATION PROCESSES
(CHOOSE THE ONE THAT APPLIES TO YOU):

- ❖ If you are an undergraduate student, 4th year student, Honour’s student, Post-graduate Diploma student or a Master’s student whose research project bears fewer than 90 credits: complete a Management Studies Ethics Application (departmental approval required).
- ❖ If you are a Master’s student whose research project bears 90 credits or more, or if you are a PhD student or an academic staff member: you will complete a Commerce Faculty Ethics Application (faculty approval required).

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU COMPLETE THE CORRECT ONLINE APPLICATION FORM. IF YOU COMPLETE THE INCORRECT FORM YOU WILL HAVE TO REDO AND RESUBMIT ANOTHER APPLICATION USING THE CORRECT FORM. (Hint: Check the title of the form at the top of the application)

LINK TO THE MANAGEMENT STUDIES ETHICS APPLICATION FORM:

<https://universityofcapetown.submittable.com/submit/108702/management-studies-ethics-applications>

LINK TO THE COMMERCE FACULTY ETHICS APPLICATION FORM:

<https://universityofcapetown.submittable.com/submit/131101/commerce-faculty-ethics-applications-2019> (this URL will change from time-to-time, usually annually).

FILLING IN THE ONLINE FORM

- 1. The form is simple to complete – please ensure all required fields (red *) are filled in otherwise you cannot submit**
- 2. Expedited review** – we all want to receive our approval timeously, but please note that expedited reviews have to be motivated and should have supporting evidence. Failing to provide sufficient evidence for why the application must be expedited will result in it being part of the normal review cycle. *Note: even expedited reviews take time – please ensure you give the committee some time to review the application.
- 3. You need to upload your research proposal** - Your application will not be considered if you do not attach a research proposal. The ethics rep will focus on the following sections of the proposal:
 - a. Purpose of research / research question
 - b. Method chapter
 - c. Ethical considerations and how they have been dealt with
 - d. Data management, including factors such as storage, availability for re-use, openness, as per the University's Research Data Management Policy

***Most students do not include sufficient detail regarding points 3 and 4 in their research proposal. They are crucial to a successful application for ethics clearance.**

- 4. Ethical considerations** (to be addressed in the research proposal as per point 3c, above)

Here are some examples of what to consider and address in your research proposal:

- Have you ensured that research participation is voluntary? Have you informed potential participants that they can withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty or consequences?
- Have your participants been informed about the nature of the research?

- If your participants are from the general public – how will you ensure that minors / legally restricted individuals do not participate in your study?
- If you are using minors you need parental consent. This needs to be documented as part of your method section in your proposal. The parental consent letter should also be attached to the ethics application.
- Is your questionnaire anonymous?
- If participants are required to provide their cell number or email address (perhaps for a lucky draw), this inevitably affects anonymity. How do you deal with this?
- Does your research pose any potential risk? If so, what are those risks? How will you address them?

An example: a taste test experiment – you should advise potential participants of ingredients and possible allergic reactions. Another example: exposing participants to sensitive graphics and/or videos.

- If you are providing an incentive for participating in your study, have you considered the ethical implications of this?
- How are you going to safeguard sensitive data?
- If your data collection is not anonymised, have you considered stripping identifiable information from the data set prior to data analysis?
- Will you be recording your interviews? If so, you need to specify this in the consent letter to be signed by potential interviewees.
- Will someone else be transcribing your interviews? If so, you should have a confidentiality agreement with your transcriber.
- These are just some examples of ethical considerations. You might have to address others that arise in your particular research context.

5. If you are conducting interviews – you need to upload the following two additional documents to your application:

- Interview consent letter** – see guidelines on how to write a questionnaire cover letter at the very bottom of the application form – the same components are required in your consent letter. Make sure to include your supervisor’s contact details here if you are a student, so that research participants can contact them if necessary.
- Interview schedule** – i.e. proposed interview questions

***race and gender questions must have a prefer not to answer option**

6. If you are using a questionnaire – you need to upload the following two additional documents to your application:

- a. **Questionnaire cover letter** – see guidelines on how to write a questionnaire cover letter at the very bottom of the application form
 - b. **The full questionnaire** – all the items included in your questionnaire
 - ***race and gender questions must have a prefer not to answer option**
7. **If you are using experiments and observations** - The protocol for experiments and observations should be thoroughly described in your attached research proposal.
8. **If you are using secondary data** - What secondary data is being used? Is the data readily accessible to the public? Are the participants identifiable? Have you received permission to access and use the data? All this information needs to be included in your attached research proposal. If approval is needed and was obtained you need to attach the permission letter / email to the application. Otherwise indicate that written permission will be obtained prior to conducting the research.

9. Types of participants

- a. If you are making use of your personal contacts (e.g. via social media) or friends and family – you would select general public. Please remember you should specify how you will ensure that you are not requesting participation from legally restricted groups, e.g. minors
- b. If you are specifically targeting a group of students in the University, asking to advertise the research on Vula sites, or getting student lists from the University – then you select students
- c. If you are using company employees i.e. employees from a particular corporate – either attach the organisation permission letter, or if not yet obtained – indicate it will be obtained prior to data collection

USE OF UCT STUDENTS

You may only apply for clearance from the Executive Director of Student Affairs for the use of students as research participants *after* you have been granted ethics approval. You will need to specify your **ethics clearance reference number** on your application form.

Once you obtain Commerce / Management Studies ethical clearance, complete a **DSA 100** form: <https://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Pages/Ethics-in-Research> (link at the bottom of this webpage). All the documents you submitted as part of your ethics application, PLUS your approved/signed ethics form/letter must accompany the DSA application.

USE OF UCT STAFF

You may not use UCT staff just because they are easily accessible, given that your research is being conducted at UCT. The only time UCT staff should form part of your proposed participants is when they form part of the sample required, i.e. your research pertains to the work/life balance of academics.

You may only apply for clearance from the Executive Director of Human Resources *after* you have been granted ethics approval. You will need to specify your **your ethics clearance reference number** on your application form.

Once you obtain Commerce / Management Studies ethical clearance – complete a HR 194 form: <https://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Pages/Ethics-in-Research> (link at the bottom of this webpage). All the

documents you submitted as part of your ethics application, PLUS your approved/signed ethics form/letter must accompany the DSA application.

10. SUPERVISORS SIGNATURE AND SIGN-OFF

Your supervisor has to see the online form and ensure that all necessary documents have been uploaded. The easiest way to achieve this is to set up a meeting with your supervisor, log in to your submittable and go through the form with him/her.

They are the first checking point – ensuring that everything is correct is one of their responsibilities.

They are then required to sign the signatory's page which is available for download from the application form. PLEASE ENSURE YOU FILL IN YOUR PROJECT TITLE ON THIS PAGE (MOST STUDENTS LEAVE THIS BLANK)

11. CHECKING YOUR APPLICATION

In your submittable account you are able to view all of the activity of your application, when it was received, who is was assigned to, etc. Any emails sent to you via the system are also tracked in the activities log. If you have not received any emails, PLEASE go and view this log, before making an inquiry on the status of your application.

As a rule of thumb: initial feedback will be provided within 15 WORKING days. The actual approval will take longer than this if you have to make adjustments and changes.

HEALTH RESEARCH

Health Application **all researchers to read this information*

Is your research in the field of health? If so you are required to submit an *additional* ethics application to Health Sciences – this clearance process can take months, so needs to be factored in to your planning as soon as possible.

If you find that you do need Health Sciences approval, give consideration to re-designing your experiment/research so as to remove it from the field of health.

“health research” includes any research which contributes to knowledge of-

- (a) the biological, clinical, psychological or social processes in human beings;
- (b) improved methods for the provision of health services;
- (c) human pathology;
- (d) causes of disease;
- (e) the effects of the environment on the human body;
- (f) the development or new application of pharmaceuticals, medicines and
- (g) the development of new applications of health technology;

Please read the **Health Faculty's Ethics Policy**; available here:

<https://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Downloads/Ethics%20in%20Health%20Research%20Final%20A%20used.pdf>