WHICH ETHICS COMMITTEE?

RESEARCH

NHS PATIENTS?
NO

NHS STAFF, FACILITIES, OR DATA?
NO

CLINICAL TRIALS & RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

YES

YES

NHS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IDREC

14+ DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES*


MEDICAL SCIENCES IDREC

OXFORD TROPICAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

RESEARCH ETHICS AND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Central University Research Ethics Committee
researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics
General information about ethical review and University policy including training links, resources, templates, FAQs and best practice guidance

Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee
researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/apply/shidrec
Specific information about how to apply to the Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC for ethical review, including details of Departmental Research Ethics Committees
Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk

Medical Sciences Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee
researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/apply/msidrec
Specific information about how to apply to the Medical Sciences IDREC for ethical review
Email: ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk

Oxford Tropical Research Ethics Committee
researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/apply/oxtrec
Specific information about how to apply to OxtREC for ethical review
Email: oxtrec@admin.ox.ac.uk

Clinical Trials and Research Governance
researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/ctrg
Advice and support for research requiring NHS review or HRA approval
Email: ctrg@admin.ox.ac.uk

RESEARCH ETHICS AND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

An introduction to human research ethics at Oxford

researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics
What is research ethics?

Research involving human participants and personal data raises important ethical questions, such as:

- Will the participants be safe?
- Is the data stored securely?
- Do the participants understand what is involved for them?
- Will the research be beneficial?

Research ethics examines these kinds of question in detail by applying moral principles and codes of professional conduct to all stages of the research process—planning the project, collecting and analysing the data, and reporting on the results.

At the core of research ethics lies a commitment to protection of the individual. There are certain rights that all human beings share—the right to privacy, confidentiality, and free choice, for example. By adhering to moral rules and professional codes in carrying out research, we are doing our best to ensure that individuals and their rights are protected.

What makes research ethical?

Research that is ethical will be well designed, conducted equitably and safely, and will deliver some benefit to society.

In particular, research that is ethical will:

- maximise benefit—for both individuals and society
- minimise the risk of harm to participants
- obtain informed consent from potential participants and
- protect participants’ anonymity and confidentiality.

What does this mean for me?

The University’s policy on the ethical conduct of research involving human participants and personal data states that all such research should be subject to appropriate ethical review. This review will be proportionate to the risk of harm and appropriate to specific subject disciplines.

In practice, this means that if you are planning a research project involving human participants or personal data, you will (in most cases) need to submit an application for ethical review of your project to the appropriate research ethics committee.

"New situations constantly emerge in the social science arena which require creative approaches to ethics issues. [General guidance] cannot replace the need for self-critical, imaginative and responsible ethical reflection about issues which may arise in the course of research [...]"

Economic and Social Research Council: Core Principles for Research Ethics

Economic and Social Research Council (Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee) reviews applications from researchers based in departments within the Social Sciences Divisions, as well as from some departments in the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences.

Many departments in the Social Sciences Division have their own Departmental Research Ethics Committees (DRECs). Where a DREC exists, applications from that department should be submitted to the DREC rather than the IDREC in the first instance.

To check whether your department has its own DREC, please go to researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/committees/dreecs. On this page, you can find a list of DREC contacts as well as further information on how to apply.

OxTREC (the Oxford Tropical Research Ethics Committee) reviews (a) medical and health-related research taking place outside the EU; and (b) research funded by US federal funding agencies.