Stage 1: Self-Assessment Checklist
Cambridge Higher Education Studies Research Ethics Committee (CHESREC)

Is your project educational research?

- NO

- YES

Are you based in a non-department or faculty affiliated institution at the University of Cambridge?

- NO

- YES

Teaching or Course Evaluation / Review

Internal evaluation or review of teaching / courses does NOT normally require ethics review. However, if you intend to publish this work, or to incorporate some elements in a scholarly study, then you are advised to seek ethics review.

Non-educational research

Non-educational research should be submitted to an appropriate disciplinary ethics committee.

You are based at the Faculty of Education

Go to the Faculty of Education ethics review process: www.educ.cam.ac.uk/internal/administration/policies/R001-ethics/

You are based in another Faculty or Department

Go to your local ethics review process in the first instance. You may seek further advice from the CHESREC committee members if your research is educational and you are seeking to recruit Cambridge student/staff as research subjects, or if your project involves a multi-disciplinary research team, or is a Cambridge student-staff partnership project.

Does the research project involve human participants or personal data in any way?

- NO

- YES

Such proposals will not normally require ethics review, unless they involve unpublished secondary data, such as existing survey data, assessment results or interview transcripts. Advice should be sought in cases of doubt.

Does the research project involve the collection of new data from Cambridge students or staff (eg interview, observation, original survey)?

- NO

- YES

If the proposal involves analysis of secondary data, ethics review might still be required. Examples of such cases include:

- Use of data which has not been anonymised
- Use of anonymised data which could be combined with other data causing subjects to be identifiable
- Research using data whose outcome has implications for an identifiable class of people (e.g. students from non-traditional backgrounds, students with disabilities, staff in a small programme)

Ethics review of your research proposal will be required. Submission of the complete CHESREC application form will be necessary. Based on an initial assessment, if your project involves low-risk educational research, then your application will undergo Stage 2: Proportionate Review which involves ethics review and sign-off by two members of CHESREC, usually within two weeks. If the proposal involves risk factors such as those listed below, then this lighter touch review will usually not be sufficient and the application will be forwarded to the CHESREC committee for Stage 3: Full Review, which usually meets once a term but may consider applications outside of the formal meeting schedule.

Risk factors that may require Stage 3: Full Review if not appropriately considered and addressed in the ethics application:

- Vulnerable people (e.g. students with Special Learning Disabilities SpLDs)
- Sensitive subjects (e.g. plagiarism, sexual harassment)
- Dependent subjects/people less able to refuse consent (e.g. the researcher’s own students)
- Potential to cause distress, discomfort or anxiety
- Study of individuals without their prior knowledge or consent
- Experiments or other data collection involving deception
- Research that might expose participants to a risk of disciplinary action or damage to reputation
- ‘Gate keeper’ communities where authority/access permission is required to conduct the study (e.g. Colleges)

If this local-level research ethics review procedure cannot provide an appropriate degree of review for your proposal, it may be submitted to a relevant School-level Research Ethics Committee, or on to the University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact CHESREC for advice at any stage: chesrec@cctl.cam.ac.uk