

# Submitting an ethics review application via the online submission system ('My Research')

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS\*

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\*These instructions are for using the online ethics review submission system. Students should also consult the LSE Research Ethics Policy and related guidance which can be found here: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/research-ethics/research-ethics> as well as any departmental guidance.

## Overview

An ethics review must be completed for research involving ANY of the following:

- Interviews, surveys, focus groups, experiments with or observations of people, etc.
- User generated data (e.g. from discussion forums, social media platforms, vlogs or blogs, comments on posts or articles)
- The collection of any personal data/identifiable information (e.g. names, email addresses, IP addresses, social media profiles or meta-data, visual material, etc.), or use of any secondary data that include any personal data/identifiable information<sup>1</sup>
- Any other information that could identify (or potentially lead to the identification of) a living individual. For example, where information from micro datasets, if combined, could lead to the identification of individuals, or where an online search for particular wording could lead to the identification of an individual.
- The potential that findings/conclusions/publication may have damaging repercussions for any individuals (reputation, stigma, bullying) or groups with protected characteristics
- Any other reason why the research might raise ethical issues

Using the **My Research** platform you can:

- Submit an ethics review application
- Log in at any time to check the status of your application
- Receive automatic notifications by email when any action is required
- Provide details of any external ethics review that your project will or has undergone

## Review/approval routes

### 1) Departmental<sup>2</sup> review

Applications that raise few ethical issues will be automatically routed to Departmental review/approval. For students, such applications will be reviewed by the project/dissertation/thesis supervisor (or academic mentor/advisor) as appropriate<sup>3</sup>.

MSc student projects which are **not** for dissertations, and **all** undergraduate projects, are exempted from RERB review (unless the project supervisor has concerns and refers to the RERB), even where the project includes elements that would normally require review/approval by the Research Ethics Review Board (formerly the Research Ethics Committee).

### 2) Research Ethics Review Board (RERB)<sup>4</sup> review

Except for the exemption noted above for UG and PGT students, applications for projects that include any of the following elements will be categorised as requiring review/approval by the Research Ethics Review Board:

<sup>1</sup> Research that will only use data from publicly available archival records (including newspapers) does not require ethics review (unless there are other reasons why it may give rise to ethical issues).

<sup>2</sup> For reasons of simplicity the term 'Departmental' is used here to encompass research Centres and Institutes too.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter in this guidance the word 'supervisor' is used to encompass project/dissertation/thesis supervisor (or academic mentor/advisor) as appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> The Research Ethics Committee (REC) has now become the Research Ethics Review Board (RERB). Some parts of the online system, however, will still refer to the REC.

- sensitive topics (which participants may find emotional or distressing);
- involvement of vulnerable groups as participants;
- research that poses a risk (whether physical or emotional/psychological) to either the participant or the researcher beyond that normally encountered in their regular activities;
- use of deception or the withholding of information as to the true purpose of the research;
- where consent will not be obtained in writing (with an exception for the Anthropology department).

Student applications will first be reviewed by the relevant supervisor before being submitted (by the supervisor) to the Research Ethics Review Board. (A supervisor cannot approve an application that requires Research Ethics Review Board review/approval).

Applications are automatically categorised as requiring Departmental or RERB review/approval. After submission the researcher will be notified if any further information is required, and/or when the application has been approved.

## Timeframes

All researchers must ensure that they have ethics approval before they commence any data collection or recruitment of participants.

Applications can be submitted at any time; however, students need to check any internal Departmental deadlines, and allow for those plus the following timeframes for the review/approval process:

- o **Departmental review:** please check the timeframe with the relevant project supervisor and/or your department.
- o **Research Ethics Review Board review:** student applications first go to the relevant project supervisor for review. Students should monitor the status of their application online and send a reminder to the supervisor if necessary. Once the supervisor submits the application to the Research Ethics Review Board students can usually expect to receive **feedback** from the Review Board within two weeks of submission. However **approval** may take longer – for example, the student may be asked to provide some additional details, clarification or amendments before approval can be confirmed. Complex applications may require longer and/or further iterations with the researcher. Students should, as a rule, **allow at least four weeks for the RERB review process (in addition to the review by the supervisor)**.<sup>5</sup>
- o **Expedited review:** where there is a genuine case for urgency due to circumstances which could not have been anticipated and which are outside of the researcher's control,<sup>6</sup> the Research Ethics Review Board will expedite the review process as quickly as possible; researchers should email [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk) to request this. Please do not expect, however, that urgency will pre-empt the full extent of the review process.
- o **'Approval not required':** where students receive an email notification that approval may not be required, the application is automatically forwarded to the relevant project supervisor who will check that the form has been completed correctly and will either confirm that approval is not required or request changes. The student must await such confirmation before commencing any data collection.

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<sup>5</sup> At peak times of the year, usually between late March and mid-June, review times may take longer.

<sup>6</sup> For example, in the case of fast-track funding to address global or national emergencies.

## What questions will I need to answer in the review form?

The review questions are presented over a series of screens (for more details see below). So that you know what questions to expect on each screen, you can see all the questions [here](#).

## What supporting documentation will I need?

When you have answered the questions in the ethics review form you will then need to upload the following documentation:

- The **informed consent document(s)** you intend to use. This is required before you can submit the form. (There may be some circumstances in which a researcher will not be obtaining informed consent - for instance in some participant observation settings; in these cases there is a tick box at the top of the Attachments section where you can indicate that informed consent will not be obtained, and you will then be able to submit your ethics review application.) Sample templates which can be used for the informed consent can be found within the LSE Guidance on Informed Consent<sup>7</sup>. Please ensure you adapt the template to your particular study.
- **Other supporting documentation** is not mandatory but may be helpful for the review, such as a more detailed description of the study if you have one. If your topic is quite sensitive you should upload an outline of your planned interview questions/guide (even if these are not yet finalised). You can also add any further documentation that you think relevant.

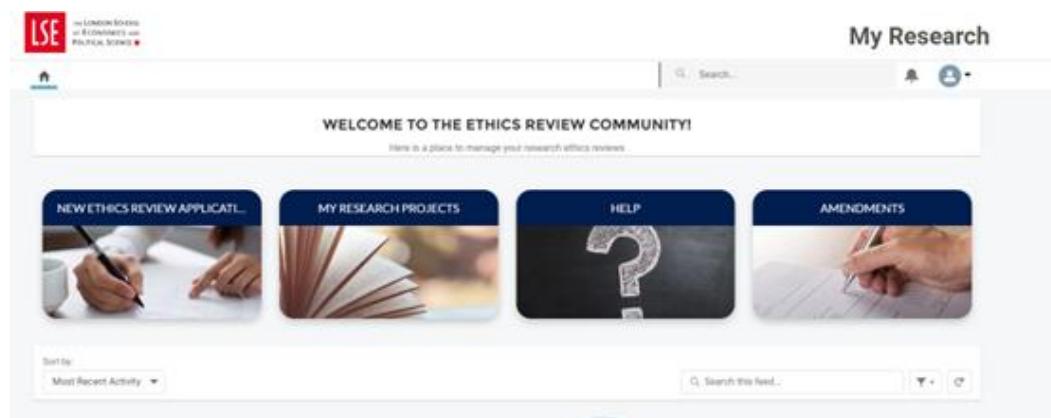
## How to submit an ethics review application

### Logging in to 'My Research'

We recommend that researchers use **Google Chrome**<sup>8</sup>

Go to the 'My Research' portal via <https://portal.lse.ac.uk/myresearch/login>.

Log in using your normal LSE login details. You will then be presented with the **My Research** homepage:



<sup>7</sup> <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/infCon.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> If you experience any problems with cookies, please see the guidance [here](#)

From this screen you can either begin a new ethics review application, or you can view and amend existing or previous applications you have submitted. **Any applications you previously started will be visible under the 'My Research Projects' tab.** (All applications are saved as soon as you progress beyond screen A. **Please try not to create multiple applications for the same project.**)

## Creating and completing a new ethics review application

To begin, click on the box '**New ethics review application**'. You will then be presented with the first screen of questions.

When completing the form, please note:

- All questions are mandatory (if any questions are not applicable you can enter N/A).
- Data is automatically saved once you progress beyond screen A.
- Your form will not be submitted until you have completed all screens, uploaded any required documentation and submitted.

### **Note: Use of AI when completing the ethics review form**

Please note that whilst use of AI may help give you some useful ideas of some of the ethics considerations to bear in mind and ways to mitigate any ethics concerns your study may give rise to, we strongly discourage researchers from copying responses from AI into the ethics form. Doing so is likely to result in the inclusion of generic information that is not relevant to your study or that contradicts information you provide elsewhere in the form or attachments. Where this is the case it is likely to delay the review of your ethics form.

The review form comprises the following screens<sup>9</sup>:

- A: About the study
- B: Researcher Details
- C: Does the study require research ethics approval<sup>10</sup>
- D: LSE vs external research ethics review
- E: External ethics review details (*screen E only appears if 'Yes' answered to any questions on Screen D*)
- F: Type of ethics review / ethics considerations
- G: Ethics Review Questions (General)
- H: Ethics Review Questions (Additional) (*Screen H only appears if certain elements flagged in Screen F*)
- J: Previous experience and covering comments

At the end of the review **form** (screen J), when you click Next you'll be taken to the Next Steps screen

## Next steps (attachments) screen

The top of the screen confirms the status and what next steps are required:

<sup>9</sup> Remember, if you want to know what questions to expect on each screen, you can see all the questions [here](#)

<sup>10</sup> If the study does not require ethics approval the form may end at the end of this screen. See further details about 'Approval Not Required' in section 3 below.

If you want to go back to re-edit the application form click on 'Edit form'.

If you want to download a pdf copy of your application form there is a 'Print form' button.

Otherwise, continue to the 'Attachments' section below.

**The Attachments section** consist of two parts:

**i) Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form:**

Before your application is sent to your supervisor and/or the Research Ethics Committee for review and approval, you need to upload a copy of your Participant Information Sheet and Consent form. You can find guidance on informed consent (including a sample template) [here](#).

**Written consent:** Written consent is always preferable (unless it is not appropriate – for instance where participants are not fully literate, or in places where signing forms is viewed with suspicion, or may put the participant at risk). If you are collecting written consent please upload the Participant Information Sheet and Consent (PISC) form using the 'Upload files' button above. You can upload more than one document – for example if you have more than one type of PISC (e.g. for different types of participants, or different types of data collection)

**Online surveys:** If you are collecting your data via an online survey, please upload a document that shows the text that participants will receive at the start and how they will indicate their consent before proceeding to the survey/questionnaire.

**Verbal consent:** If you will be collecting verbal consent, you should have provided a rationale for this in your response to question H5 of the review form, and explained how you will record consent (please use the 'Edit form' button above if you need to go back and check). Please attach the script of the informed consent information that will be read out to participants.

**Participant observation / ethnography:** If you will be conducting participant observation or ethnography and will not be providing participants with an information sheet or collecting consent, this should have been explained in your response to question G5 of the review form (please use the 'Edit form' button above if you need to go back and check). Please check the button above to confirm you are not providing any informed consent documents.

**Use of deception:** If your research involves a degree of deception, please also upload the de-briefing information that will be given to participants at the end of the data collection.

Please read the information on the page about informed consent and also refer to the LSE [Guidance on Informed Consent](#) (which includes sample templates). Then upload your informed consent document(s). If you will be using verbal consent you should upload the script that you will use.

If you will not be obtaining consent at all (e.g. in cases of participant observation in public areas), then tick the '*I am not obtaining informed consent*' button at the top of the Attachments section.

If your study involves an element of deception you should also upload a participant de-brief document.

**ii) Supporting Documentation:**

Supporting Documentation

Upload Files Or drop files

Please note that this section should NOT be used to upload your informed consent document(s) which should be uploaded in the section above. Please upload here any other relevant supporting documentation, for example:

- Your study proposal/outline/plan which gives more information about your study and proposed study methodology
- Your planned interview or survey questions
- Any other documentation you feel is relevant to your ethics review

Once the relevant documents have been uploaded the application can be submitted - the 'Submit' button at the top of the page will be enabled.

In the 'Supporting Documentation' section you can upload any other relevant documents, such as a fuller description of the study if you have one, an outline of your interview questions/guide, etc. (You should attach the latter if your topic is quite sensitive.)

## Submitting

Once you have uploaded your informed consent and any other documentation the 'Submit' button at the top of the page will be enabled (it will be red).

**Once you click to submit your application, the page will update.**

The 'Ethics Review Status' near the top of the page will state 'With supervisor'. The project supervisor will receive an automatic notification by email and will be able to access your review form and attachments.

You will not be able to edit your ethics application form, but if you wish to view the form you can click the 'Review' button and then the 'Print form' button will appear which will allow you to download or print a pdf copy.

## When you've finished

When you have submitted your application you can either log out of My Research or you can click on the 'My Research Projects' tab. Here you will find a list of this and any other applications you have submitted for ethics review and [view their status](#).

**It is important that you keep an eye on the status of the your application review, as you cannot commence data collection until your application shows as Approved.**

You will receive an email notification once your application has been reviewed and/or approved. Note that for applications requiring RERB review the approval must come from the Research Ethics Review Board (not the supervisor).

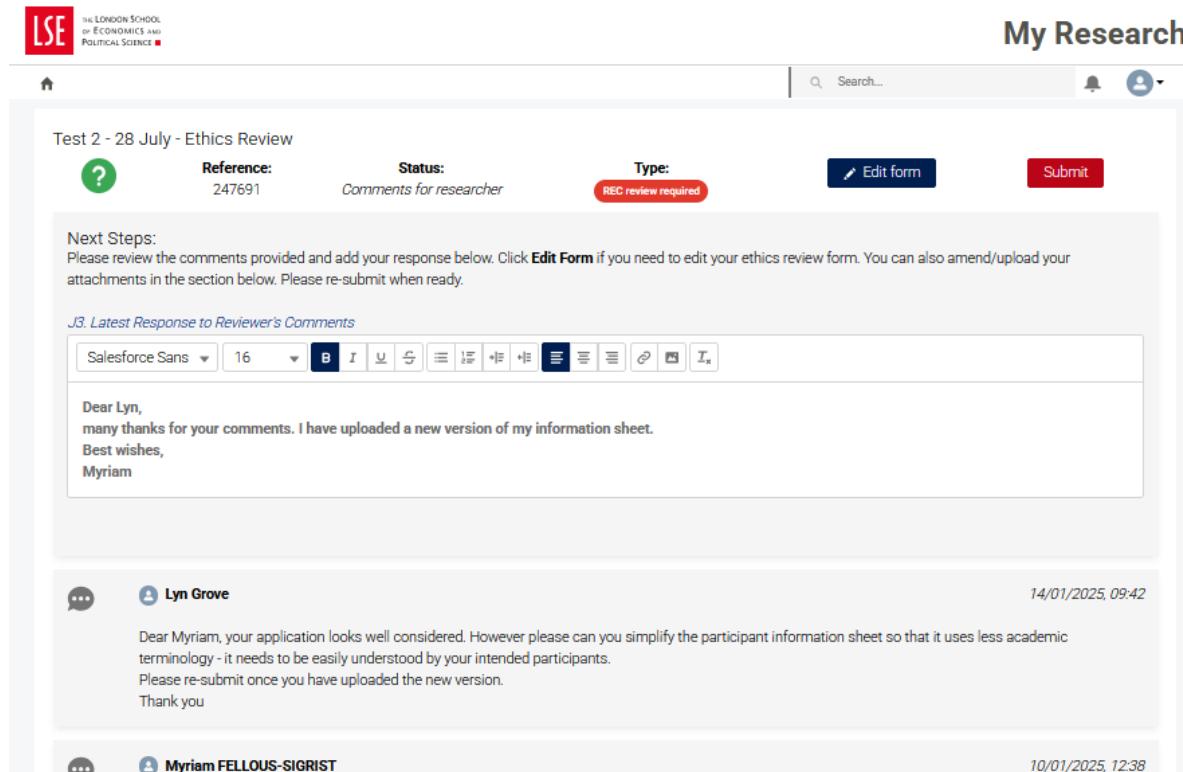
## The review process (and responding to reviewer comments)

### 1. Departmental Review

Once your project supervisor has reviewed your application you will receive an email notification that:

- i) They have approved the application, OR
- ii) They request some further information

In the case of (ii), the email notification will show the supervisor's comments. It will also contain a blue button 'Update Application'; once you click on that button, you will see the Next Steps page. Here you can also view the supervisor's comments (if you click on 'Show comments') - see screenshot below.



The screenshot shows the LSE My Research application interface. At the top, there is a header with the LSE logo and a search bar. Below the header, the application title is 'Test 2 - 28 July - Ethics Review'. The application details are as follows:

- Reference: 247691
- Status: Comments for researcher
- Type: REC review required
- Buttons: Edit form and Submit

The 'Next Steps' section contains a note: 'Please review the comments provided and add your response below. Click **Edit Form** if you need to edit your ethics review form. You can also amend/upload your attachments in the section below. Please re-submit when ready.' Below this, there is a rich text editor labeled 'J3. Latest Response to Reviewer's Comments' with the following content:

Dear Lyn,  
many thanks for your comments. I have uploaded a new version of my information sheet.  
Best wishes,  
Myriam

Below the response, there are two messages in the conversation history:

- Lyn Grove** (14/01/2025, 09:42): Dear Myriam, your application looks well considered. However please can you simplify the participant information sheet so that it uses less academic terminology - it needs to be easily understood by your intended participants.  
Please re-submit once you have uploaded the new version.  
Thank you
- Myriam FELLOUS-SIGRIST** (10/01/2025, 12:38):

### Responding to reviewer comments

You can respond to the supervisor's comments in box J3 ("Response to reviewers' comments" box). Use the 'Edit form' button to make any necessary changes to the ethics form and/or attachments. We recommend you include in J3 a note of which sections/attachments you have made changes to as this is helpful for the reviewers.

Once you have made the relevant changes you must click **Submit** to return the application to the supervisor. You will receive a further notification with your supervisor's response in due course.

## 2. Research Ethics Review Board review<sup>11</sup>

For applications categorised as requiring Research Ethics Review Board review, your project supervisor will first review the application prior to submitting it to the Research Ethics Review Board for review/approval.

If your supervisor has any questions/requests for further information that they wish you to address before it can be submitted to the RERB you will receive an email notification and will be able to use the link to access and amend your review form and/or supporting documents before re-submitting (as per (ii) above).

<sup>11</sup> MSc student projects which are **not** for dissertations, and **all** undergraduate projects, are exempted from RERB review (unless the supervisor has concerns and opts to refer the application to the RERB).

If/once your supervisor has no further comments they will refer the application to the Research Ethics Review Board for review. Once the application has been reviewed by the RERB you will receive further email notifications as relevant – for example you may be asked to respond to the reviewers' comments or provide further information before your application is approved.

Once approved, you will receive an email notification confirming approval.

**You must await approval by the Research Ethics Review Board before you begin any data collection or recruitment of participants.**

### **3. 'Approval not required'**

If your study will not involve any of the types of data collection or issues listed at the top of p.2, your study will not require ethics approval – however this is subject to confirmation by the project supervisor.

When you click 'Next' at the bottom of Screen C the form will end there and you will receive an email notification that approval may not be required. The form will be automatically sent to the project supervisor who will review the details you have submitted. The supervisor will confirm whether approval is not required or whether changes to the form are required. You will receive an email notification confirming whether or not any further action is required.

**You must await confirmation from your supervisor that Approval is not required before you begin any data collection.**

### **4. External review**

*Student projects do not often undergo external ethics review by another organisation. If you are not sure, please discuss with your project supervisor or contact [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk) before submitting your ethics review form.*

The School seeks to avoid duplication of ethics review where possible. If your project will undergo ethics review at another academic institution or equivalent organization, you may be able to request exemption from LSE review. You need to complete the ethics review form as far as screen E. At question E2 ('Will you also require LSE ethics review/approval?') you can answer 'No'. Once you submit, the form will be received by the Research Ethics Managers. The REM will assess whether or not the external review is appropriate/sufficient or whether the application should also go through the School's research ethics review/approval process. Examples of where external review would normally be considered appropriate/sufficient could include:

- Where the external organisation is another academic institution within the UK;
- Where the external organisation is an international academic institution operating in a country with equivalent ethical standards to the UK, and has a defined ethics review policy/ approval procedure<sup>12</sup>;
- Where the external organisation is a third-party organisation that can demonstrate the existence of an ethics approval process that aligns to the standards applicable to higher education institutions and /or is appropriate for the research in question (e.g. Health Research Authority/NHS REC, Social Care Research Ethics Committee, etc.).

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<sup>12</sup> Some US Institutional Review Boards exempt low risk studies from requiring review/approval. Since the LSE ethics policy requires review for any study involving human participants or identifiable data, a US IRB *exemption* will not be accepted in lieu of LSE ethics review approval.

The researcher will need to confirm that the external ethics review/approval will cover all research activities to be undertaken by themselves/any LSE researchers involved in the project, and to provide a copy of the external ethics approval once that has been obtained.

## How to amend an application after approval

Ethics review forms cannot be edited once they have been approved. If you need to make amendments to a study that has already received ethics approval please follow these steps:

- Complete the [amendments form](#).<sup>13</sup>
- Send this to the research ethics team via [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk) (students should copy in their project supervisor)
- The research ethics team will advise whether any further review of the proposed amendment is required (either by the supervisor/Department or the Research Ethics Review Board as appropriate) prior to approval.
- Once approval is confirmed, the research ethics team will upload a copy of the Amendments form to the researcher's original ethics application submission online.

For very minor amendments please email the [Research Ethics](#) team in the first instance to check if an amendments form is required. Taught students should avoid wherever possible having to make any amendments to their projects over the summer vacation period that will require ethics approval as their project supervisor may not be available to review these changes where required.

## Questions/support

If you have any questions relating to the ethics review process please contact the research ethics team via [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk) We aim to respond within 2 working days.

If you have any technical problems please contact [Research.systems@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Research.systems@lse.ac.uk)

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<sup>13</sup> You can also find this form by going to 'My Research' via <https://portal.lse.ac.uk/myresearch/login> and log in using your normal LSE login details.