

ETHICS GUIDANCE NOTE: EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

1. UNIVERSITY POLICY

Internal consultation activities with colleagues and students are not included in the scope of the University's [Research Ethics Policy](#). This includes activities and events to support the evaluation of:

- Events such as workshops, seminars and conferences
- University policies and procedures
- Educational programmes
- Other University services and offerings

However, the University expects that these types of activities are carried out with due regard to ethical principles such as voluntary participation, consent and data protection. The University provides a number of resources to support good practice and ensure that the dignity, rights and wellbeing of colleagues and students are protected (see Section 4: Further Information and Guidance).

2. EXCEPTIONS

Although formal ethical approval is not required for evaluation activities, the University acknowledges that there may be situations where an additional level of assurance is needed. Therefore an exemption may be requested if:

- A. There is an external funder, publisher or regulatory requirement and / or
- B. The activity is potentially high-risk.

A definition of 'potentially high-risk activities' is provided in Section 5.3 of the University's [Research Ethics Policy](#). This includes (but is not limited to):

- The discussion of sensitive topics, which may cause distress to participants.
- Limitations of confidentiality in relation to the discussion of safeguarding issues.
- The sharing of personal data with third parties (including publishers / regulatory bodies).
- Working with animals in any capacity (including wellbeing animals).

3. PROCEDURE

Colleagues wishing to apply for an exemption should follow the steps set out in the University's [ethical review process](#).

Prior to completing the [online ethics form](#), the activity lead should contact the relevant Ethics Sub Committee to obtain approval for the exemption:

- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: HaSS.Ethics@ncl.ac.uk
- Faculty of Medical Sciences: fmsethics@ncl.ac.uk
- Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering: sage.ethics@ncl.ac.uk
- Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board: AWERB@ncl.ac.uk

It should be noted that University Research Ethics Committee is an assurance body and does not play an active role in the ethical review process. Therefore, an **appropriate academic lead** must be

identified to facilitate review by one of the three Faculty Research Ethics Committee - or the AWERB, if the activity involves animals. However, Professional Services colleagues in central services may seek guidance from the Research Policy, Intelligence and Ethics team (email: res.policy@ncl.ac.uk) to help identify the most appropriate route for obtaining approval.

Wherever possible, **block approval** should be sought to cover multiple activities which fall under a single programme of work and have a similar research design and methodology.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Data Protection legislation

To understand their legal obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), all colleagues should complete the mandatory [Information Security \(previously GDPR\)](#) e-learning module, which can be accessed via the University's Learning Management System (LMS). Further guidance is also available on the University's internal [GDPR web pages](#) (staff login required) or by emailing the Information Governance team: rec-man@ncl.ac.uk.

Research Ethics

In addition to the guidance provided in the University's [Research Ethics Policy](#), colleagues undertaking evaluation activities may find it useful to refer to the following resources:

- [Research Ethics e-learning module](#), which can be accessed via the LMS (staff login required).
- [Research Integrity e-learning programme](#), which includes a module on research involving human participants.
- Online ethics toolkit: [human participation](#).
- Online ethics toolkit: [data](#).
- [Informed Consent Guidelines](#).

Further information, support and advice may also be requested from the central Research Policy and Ethics team (email: res.policy@ncl.ac.uk).

Research Policy, Intelligence and Ethics Team
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