**Exceptional Block Ethics Approval for UG & PGT Levels**

**Guidance and Form**

This guidance introduces the Block Ethics Approval process for ethics **review of student research at undergraduate and taught post-graduate levels ONLY** (provided the research fulfils the criteria detailed below). It should be read alongside DMU’s [Research Ethics Code of Practice.](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/dmu-policies-and-external-requirements-.aspx)

All research involving human participants, or their data, requires ethics review. Whilst normally this review is done on a project-by-project basis, it is recognised that for UG / PGT level there are occasions where students may complete very similar or identical projects that are very low risk. In such cases it may be proportionate to approve research at a programme or module level, rather than individually for each student.

**Please note**: Applications for PGT dissertation modules are NOT suitable for the Block Ethics Approval process.

Block Ethics Approval applies when basic research is undertaken by students as part of a taught module on a routine basis or as part of a programme of work that is extremely low risk. Such cases will be typified by, for the most part, a consistency in practice and approach in terms of the research process, and where the research is assessed to be low risk.

### Criteria for determining if the Block Ethics Approval process is appropriate:

1. The projects do not involve high or medium-risk research topics as defined by the [Research](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/dmu-policies-and-external-requirements-.aspx) [Ethics Code of Practice](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/dmu-policies-and-external-requirements-.aspx), or where the ethical risks are static and well-understood;
2. The project design and methodologies are static (or subject to only minor change);
3. The risk of any unexpected ethics concerns arising is minimal, (for e.g. multisite, collaborative projects are at a higher risk of developing complications)
4. The relevant supervisor(s) are aware and capable of discharging their responsibilities for the conduct and integrity of the project.

### Guidance for module / programme leaders:

1. A block application for ethics approval should be submitted by the programme / module leader or the staff member responsible for coordinating research project ethics.
2. Programmes must have in place mechanisms to ensure that research taking place under the auspices of a block approval adhere to the scope of the approval as defined in the approved application form;
3. Any project falling outside the defined scope of the application will not be covered and will therefore need an individual student ethics application for review at programme level using the [Worktribe ethics portal](https://dmu.worktribe.com/).
4. Those supervising research must be familiar with DMU’s [Research Ethics Code of Practice](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/dmu-policies-and-external-requirements-.aspx).

### Process for application and approval

Applications for block approval must be reviewed / approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) review panel following the procedures set out below:

1. The module / programme leader should initially contact the Faculty Head of Research Ethics (FHRE), or the Deputy to determine if the module concerned fulfil the criteria for Block Ethics Approval;
2. If it has been determined that a Block Application is suitable, the

programme / module leader or the staff member responsible for coordinating the research project should complete a ‘Block Ethics Approval Screening Form’ which can be found in Appendix 1 below;

1. If the screening questions in Appendix 1 determine that the module **is** suitable for the block ethics application process, the programme / module leader / staff member responsible for coordinating the research project should create and submit an ethics application via the university’s online ethics system, [Worktribe,](https://dmu.worktribe.com/) using their DMU using staff single sign-on (as User ID) and password. (See ‘Submitting a Worktribe block approval application’ below)
2. If the screening questions in Appendix 1 determines that the module **IS NOT** suitable for the block application process, students should submit individual applications for research ethics approval via the [Worktribe](https://dmu.worktribe.com/) ethics portal.

* A series of short demonstration videos and detailed step- by- step guides are available for UG / PGT students in the ‘Help’ section of Worktribe ([3. Ethics](https://dmu.worktribe.com/record.jx?recordid=410801) [Training for Worktribe](https://dmu.worktribe.com/record.jx?recordid=410801)).

1. When the application for block approval has been submitted through Worktribe, the application will follow the workstream process for review by the FREC review panel. Feedback will be returned to the applicant (programme / module lead / staff member responsible for coordinating the research project) through the Worktribe system in due course.
2. Once approved, block approval is valid for a period of three years, after which a new application must be submitted.
3. A summary of all projects conducted under the auspices of block approval must be submitted to [ethics.cem@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ethics.cem@dmu.ac.uk) on an annual basis using the ‘Block Ethics Approval - Annual Reporting Form’ (see Appendix 2 below);
4. At the end of the three-year approval period, FHREs should complete an audit of research taking place under the auspices of that approval against the original application. Any discrepancies will be taken into consideration by the Committee when deciding upon re- approval of future applications for the programme / module.

**Submitting a Worktribe block approval application:**

* 1. The responsible member of staff (e.g. module lead) should create a new ethics application within Worktribe. See the [Help section of Worktribe](https://dmu.worktribe.com/record.jx?recordid=410801) for further general help on submitting an ethics application;
  2. You will then be asked to enter the following information;
* Title – please ensure that you enter the title as BLOCK APPLICATION – followed by the title of the research topic;
* Project Dates – these should span the next three academic years
* Project Description – You may enter a brief description of the nature of the Block Approval project / s;
* Applicant – This should be pre-populated with your name;
* Org Unit - ensure your school is selected. This is usually pre-populated. Note: do not select the module code in this field!
* Tags – Select ‘Block Approval’ from the drop-down list;
* Select ‘Yes - Undergraduate’ or ‘Yes – Taught Masters’ to the question ‘Is this a student project’;
* Supervisor – you should enter your name into this field as well;
* Enter the relevant module code in the ‘module code’ field.
  1. Complete the remaining mandatory fields in the Worktribe submission. The application needs to provide enough information for the Ethics Committee review panel to understand the nature of the projects that may take place under the block approval. It is expected that most projects will be of a similar nature, but where there is potential for some minor variance this should be made clear. The form should specify the number of participants that would likely be recruited to each individual project.
  2. Upload a copy of the completed Block application to the ‘Documents’ tab in the Worktribe application and any other required supporting documents (e.g. participant Information Sheet, Consent form).

If you have any queries regarding the Block Ethics Approval process, please contact:

Computing, Engineering and Media (CEM): [ethics.cem@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ethics.cem@dmu.ac.uk)

**Appendix 1:**

**Block Ethics Approval - Application Form**

This checklist should be completed for every module for which approval is being sought. This form will normally be submitted by the staff member (programme lead or research module lead).

### The completed Block Ethics application and the Worktribe submission must be approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee panel before potential participants are approached by students to take part in any research.

If block ethics approval has not been obtained, students should apply individually for research ethics approval prior to approaching potential research participants.

### Section I: Screening Questions

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box. For further guidance, please refer to Appendix 2 of the [Research Ethics Code of Practice](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/dmu-policies-and-external-requirements-.aspx).

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|  | **YES** | **NO** |
| 1. Does the research involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or lack capacity to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)? |  |  |
| 2. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home)? |  |  |
| 3. Is there a risk that the research topic might lead to disclosure from the participant concerning their beliefs, involvement in illegal actions or any other activities that may represent a threat to themselves or others? |  |  |
| 4. Will the research involve collecting any personal special category information in a form that could allow the participant / participants to be identified (e.g. identifiers relating to race, ethnic origin, politics, religion, trade union membership, philosophical beliefs, genetics, biometrics, health, sex life or sexual orientation)? |  |  |
| 5. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent at the time? |  |  |
| 6. Will the research involve sensitive topics or fall under the remit of the sensitive research policy? |  |  |
| 7. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the research participants or will the research involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? |  |  |
| 8. Will the research include research that involves animals or animal tissues? |  |  |
| 9. Will blood or tissue samples that fall under the remit of the Human Tissue Authority be obtained from participants? |  |  |
| 10. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the research? |  |  |
| 11. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life to either a participant or the research themselves? |  |  |
| 12. Will the research involve prolonged or repetitive testing? |  |  |
| 13. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? |  |  |
| 14. Does the research fall under the definition of medium or high risk as defined in Appendix 2 of the Research Ethics Code of Practice? |  |  |
| **If you have answered ‘yes’ to any of the questions in Section I** the module is unsuitable for block approval and you should look to utilise individual ethical approval for student research.  **If you have answered ‘no’ to all questions**, please continue to Section II. | | |

### Section II: Screening Questions

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Do **all** students undertake common research tasks (e.g. do research on the same topic, using the same research methods, asking the same questions of participants)? | | |
|  | **YES** | **NO** |
| ***If Yes,* proceed to Section III, if No continue below:** | | |
| 1. Do students undertake research tasks from a set range (e.g. do they select their research topic from a pre-set range of options; do they employ one of a set range of research methodologies; do they ask questions of a pre-set range of issues)? | | |
|  | **YES** | **NO** |
| ***If Yes,* please proceed to Section III and provide details of the range of research tasks they undertake within your Worktribe application.**  ***If No to both questions* it appears unlikely that the module is suited for Block Approval and you should be looking to utilise individual ethical approval** **for student research.** | | |

### Section III: Applicant Details

1. Name of Applicant: Click or tap here to enter text.
2. Role / Job: Click or tap here to enter text.
3. Email address: Click or tap here to enter text.

### Section IV: Module Details

1. Module Code: Click or tap here to enter text.
2. Module Title: Click or tap here to enter text.
3. Faculty / School: Click or tap here to enter text.
4. Short Description of Research Component(s) of Module:

Click or tap here to enter text.

### Section V: Research Activities

Please ensure your Worktribe application contains sufficient details of the following: Research questions / issues to be addressed.

Research methods to be employed. Method of recruiting research participants. Criteria for selecting research participants.

Expected number of research participants for each student project.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Do students use a common Participant Information and Informed Consent Form? | | |
|  | **YES** | **NO** |
| ***If YES,* please upload a copy to your Worktribe application.** | | |
| 1. Is it intended that block approval will apply to all students enrolled in the course of study? | | |
|  | **YES** | **NO** |
| 1. Please outline how you will ensure a student’s project proposal is compliant with the terms of the Block approval. Remember that any project that is not within the terms of the block approval will require individual ethics approval. | | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | | |

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| **Version:** | **4** |
| **Date:** | **30/01/2023** |
| **Review date:** | **30/01/2024** |

Appendix 2:

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| **Block Ethics Approval – Annual Reporting Form** | | | |
| **Level of Study (UG / PGT):** | | |  |
| **Course:** | | |  |
| **Module Title:** | | |  |
| **Project Lead (module leader / programme leader):** | | |  |
| **Worktribe Approval Reference No.** | | |  |
| **Year of Study (i.e. 2022-23):** | | |  |
| **Student Name** | **Student P Number** | **Supervisor** | **Title of study** |
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