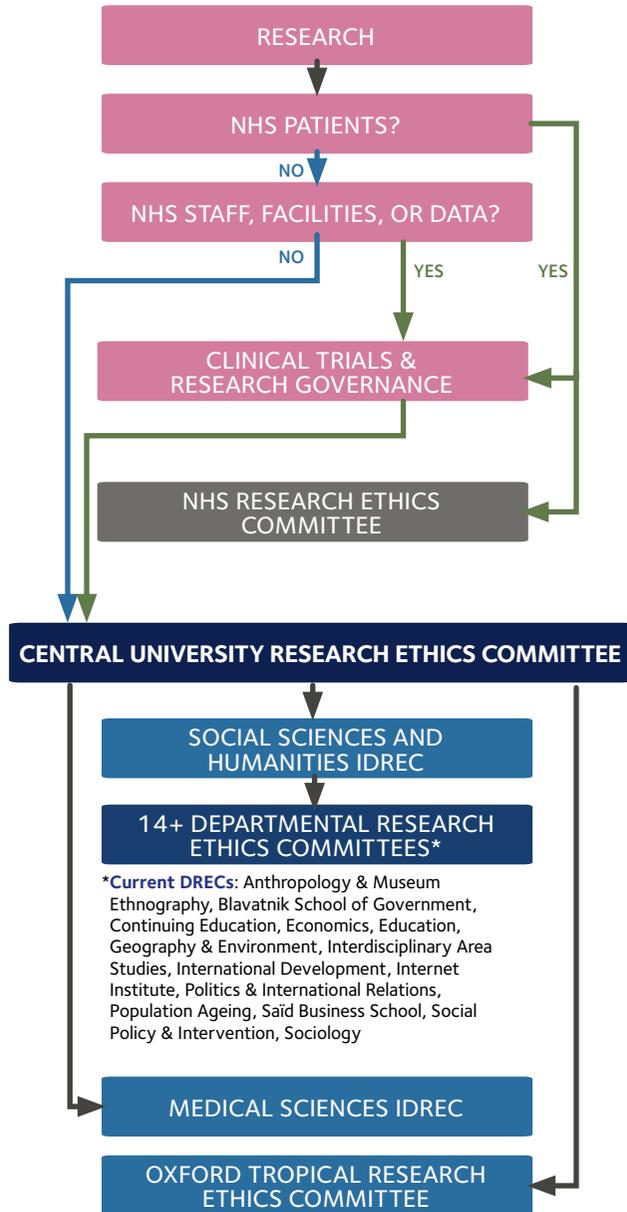


WHICH ETHICS COMMITTEE?



researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics

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/sshidrec
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/oxttrec
Specific information about how to apply to OxtTREC for ethical review
Email: oxttrec@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



RESEARCH ETHICS AND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

An introduction to human research ethics at Oxford



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“While the primary purpose of medical research is to generate new knowledge, this goal can never take precedence over the rights and interests of individual research subjects.”

World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, 2013

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.

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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.¹

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 cases²) need to submit an application for ethical review of your project to the appropriate research ethics committee.³

“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

¹ These points are derived from the Belmont Report, 1979, which sets out in detail ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human participants.

² Research using previously collected, fully anonymised data that are not traceable to individuals is not subject to ethical review.
³ Please note that retrospective reviews and approvals, once a study has been completed, are not permissible.

WHICH ETHICS COMMITTEE?

The **Central University Research Ethics Committee** (CUREC) delegates responsibility for the ethical review of research projects involving human participants and personal data to three sub-committees:

- The **Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC** (Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee) reviews applications from researchers based in departments and faculties within the **Social Sciences** and **Humanities 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/drecs. On this page, you can find a list of DREC contacts as well as further information on how to apply.

- The **Medical Sciences IDREC** (Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee) reviews applications from researchers based in departments within the **Medical Sciences Division**.

If your research involves **NHS patients** you will need to apply to an **NHS Research Ethics Committee** for review.

If your research involves **NHS staff, facilities or data**, you will need to obtain **HRA approval** or **NHS management permission** prior to review by the IDREC.

In these cases, you should initially contact the University’s **CTRG** (Clinical Trials and Research Governance) team for advice.

- **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**.