WHICH ETHICS COMMITTEE?

RESEARCH

NHS PATIENTS?

NO

NHS STAFF, FACILITIES, OR DATA?

NO

YES

YES

CLINICAL TRIALS & RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

NHS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IDREC

14+ DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES*


MEDICAL SCIENCES IDREC

OXFORD TROPICAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Central University Research Ethics Committee
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/
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
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/apply/ssh-idrec-process/
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
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/apply/ms-idrec-process/
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
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/apply/oxtrec-process/
Specific information about how to apply to OxTREC for ethical review
Email: oxtrec@admin.ox.ac.uk

Clinical Trials and Research Governance
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/ctrg/
Advice and support for research requiring NHS review or HRA approval
An introduction to human research ethics at Oxford

“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.

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/

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.

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 cases) need to submit an application for ethical review of your project to the appropriate research ethics committee.¹

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 www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/about/shidrec/drecreviews/. 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.