DCU REC Flowchart

Further details are available at https://www4.dcu.ie/researchsupport/research_integrity_ethics.shtml

Does the study involve animal subjects or human participants?

- **YES**
  - The study involves animal subjects
    - Applications involving animal subjects undergo Full Committee Review and must be pre-approved by the DCU Bio-resource Unit Advisory Group (BRAG). Please contact brag@dcu.ie with your application details.
    - Applications involving animal subjects will be submitted to REC via BRAG with a supporting letter from the BRAG committee. REC will contact the researcher in due course with the REC review outcome.

- **NO**
  - The study involves human participants
    - Will the research be conducted off site with ethical approval from another research ethics committee?
      - **YES**
        - A copy of the ethical approval from the other research ethics committee should be submitted to REC and the research can begin.
      - **NO**
        - The study should be submitted to DCU REC for ethical review. The appropriate level of review is determined by a combination of factors influencing the types and level of risk. The researcher must consider the following 3 factors: the vulnerability of the participant group, the methods used and the nature of the research itself (see chart & note below). Researchers must justify the level of review and the risks in the application. Students must discuss this in detail with their supervisor who must approve the application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements to consider:</th>
<th>Low Risk</th>
<th>Expediting Review</th>
<th>High Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Group</strong></td>
<td>Competent Adults</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Anonymous survey</td>
<td>Invasive Techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of Study</strong></td>
<td>Non-personal data sought</td>
<td>Sensitive issues addressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Please note:** Determining the level of review and degree of risk can be complex and involves making judgments. The chart should be used as a general guideline to help determine the appropriate form. It is not intended to rigidly classify projects but as a tool which suggests how to justify the choices made in the application form.

Projects where all 3 factors appear on the same point of the spectrum are the clearest. For example, an anonymous survey collecting impersonal data from competent adults has the lowest risks and would use the Notification Form. Another project involving interviews with children (a vulnerable group) about a sensitive topic (e.g. bullying) involves high risks and would require Full Committee Review. However, a project involving children (vulnerable) but using an anonymous survey to collect non-personal data (e.g. about a teaching method) could use Expediting Review. The notification form cannot be used for vulnerable participants or invasive techniques.