

Ethical review of Undergraduate and Taught Masters Research Projects by Schools/Units

Context: Research involving undergraduate and taught masters students is often more about training in research than conducting research. This does not reduce the importance of addressing relevant ethical issues. To facilitate good research ethics governance at DCU, individual Schools should have appropriate mechanisms for ethical review of undergraduate and taught masters projects (please note that all research masters, PhD and staff projects apply directly to the REC for ethical review).

Each School must develop its own policies and procedures for ethical review in accordance with best practice and as appropriate for each School's discipline. Ethical review could, for example, be carried out by research module coordinators, or a designated programme or School review panel. However, at a minimum, these procedures **must** involve the following elements:

- Each applicant completes a standard form adopted by that unit.
- Each application must be reviewed via a local process (the format of which will be prescribed by the unit, but must involve more than just supervisor review).
- Each unit retains records of each review and the subsequent decision. An approval letter should be issued to each applicant when the review is complete.
- A summary report of the projects reviewed must be submitted to the DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC) at the end of each academic year, along with a report into any problems identified during the year.

Where requested, REC will assist Schools in developing or revising their procedures. Each School's procedures should be submitted to REC for discussion and review, and will then be made available via the REC website for those seeking guidance. Any amendments to such procedures should be submitted to REC prior to local implementation.

At the end of each academic year, those responsible for ethically approving undergraduate and taught MSc research projects in each School should send the REC a list of the projects approved through the School procedures. The level (UG or Taught Masters), local reference number, project title, supervisor name and student/student's names should be provided for each application. A template for this is available on the REC website at https://www4.dcu.ie/researchsupport/research_ethics/rec_forms.shtml . This list should be e-mailed to REC@dcu.ie in advance of the June meeting (last meeting of the academic year), so we can officially record the local activity for that year.

Suggested example of local review procedures	Review panel comprises the Research Ethics Advisor plus the chairs of the relevant programmes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The review period for applications is known in advance, so applicants can meet the deadline in good time.2. The School Committee will review each application and provide written feedback to the supervisor within 2 weeks of the review taking place. The supervisor is responsible for making any requested changes to the application, and ethical approval will only be provided when all issues have been addressed.3. A letter of approval will be issued following a successful review and this letter retained on file as the official record. Suggested text: <i>The School of X Ethics Review Panel has the delegated authority from the DCU Research Ethics Committee to review and approve research activity by undergraduate and taught masters students in part completion of module learning outcomes. Further to ethical review of your application, this research proposal is approved. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the Review Panel, in advance of proceeding with the revised protocol.</i>
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