

Guidance on completing a research ethics application for an overseas project.

For the purposes of ethical review, a project is defined as 'overseas' if it involves collaborators, participants, or research sites in any country outside the UK, (including British Overseas Territories).

This document has been produced to help guide all Wrexham University staff and students through applying for ethical approval and the ethical considerations to reflect on when conducting a project outside the UK.

This document should be read alongside the [University Research Ethics Policy](#) and [University Procedure for Research Conducted outside the UK](#).

For online, multi-site/ global studies, securing research ethics approval from every country is not required.

Project Details

Section 1 will ask you all the relevant details about your project.

- If more than one Supervisor is involved in the application, please ensure they are listed under 'Collaborator'.
- Add all external collaborators to the application.
- Ensure that your project start date considers the time to obtain ethical approval.
- The maximum permitted time for ethical approval is five years.
- If the research project is funded, please provide details of the Funder Name, Amount Awarded, Role on the Project, and Funder Award Date.

External Approval

Where possible, research outside the UK should obtain research ethics approval from a local in-country ethics committee. This includes research projects where the Wrexham University researcher is based outside the UK.

- If approval has been secured from an external research ethics committee, please select 'Yes' to **Have you already secured ethical approval for this project from an external research ethics committee?** * and move to the next section of the online form.
- Provide details of the Research Ethics Committee that has reviewed and approved the research ethics application, including any institutional or organisational information. A copy of the committee's Terms of Reference should be uploaded to the application under the 'Attachments' section of the online application.
- Please detail your role on the project submitted to the external committee for approval. Please note that the Wrexham Research Ethics Committee can only recognise approval if you are listed in the application or approval.

- You will then be asked to detail the aims and objectives of the project. This should be a short project synopsis, including the methods used.
- A copy of the externally approved application and the approval letter must be uploaded to the online application form, under the 'Attachments' section before submission to the Wrexham Research Ethics Committee.
- Please note that the Wrexham Research Ethics Committee can only accept and review external applications completed in English or Welsh.

Overseas Ethical Consideration

- **Please provide details about the location(s) of the research ***

In this section, you should provide as much detail as possible about the research site(s), including the country, city/ town, organisation and where the actual data collection will take place, i.e. school classroom, lab, private meeting room, etc.

- **Please explain what efforts you have taken to secure local research ethics approval. ***

Applicants should demonstrate what processes have been put in place to try and secure local in-country research ethics approval. This might include reviewing the eligibility of submitting to a local Higher Education Institutes, referring to the World Health Organisation National Ethics Committee register, or connecting with any local non-governmental organisations.

- **What are the cultural, ethical and legal considerations of conducting research in this country? ***

University Research Ethics Committee reviewers will not know the cultural, ethical, religious, and legal considerations of conducting research in the country where your project is taking place. In this section, you must demonstrate an understanding of conducting a research project that meet local ethical norms. Things to consider:

- Review the [International Compilation of Human Research Standards](#), which details over 1,000 standards on human participant protections in 131 countries, including laws, regulations, and guidelines.
- If local research ethics approval is not in place, investigate if a local research institute/organisation or local expert (for example, an NGO) can offer guidance on the project's ethical, cultural and legal considerations or provide a letter of support.
- Ethical issues relating to power differentials may be more prominent in an international research context, especially research involving low-income countries or countries experiencing conflict and political instability. Researchers should consider any perceived or actual notions of power and how this may affect the fundamental research ethics principles, and if there are any reputational risk to the University or safety concerns to the researcher(s) or participant(s).

- If participating in an international collaboration researcher should consider potential security related issues and take the necessary steps to manage any potential risks. Staff and students should refer to the [due diligence and trusted research](#) webpages for further details. The University Research Ethics Committee may seek guidance from other departments at the University or seek guidance from external advisors where necessary on an international research project.
- You should be mindful of the process of managing voluntary participation and eliciting informed consent, which might be viewed differently in different international research settings. For example, written consent might not be considered a cultural norm, or gatekeepers might play a powerful role in determining an individual's participation. The implications of specific social and cultural contexts for consent processes should be addressed with regard to ethical principles concerned with rights, dignity, and voluntary participation (UKRI International Research).
- When conducting research outside the UK, Wrexham staff and students should be sensitive to cultural, social, and political differences in conducting research and the research topic being investigated. Applicants should discuss any potential sensitivities to the topic being investigated in the context of the country where data collection is taking place.
- Applicants should discuss and include any materials used for the proposed research project in the language in which it will be distributed, as well as an English translation.
- **What systems do you have in place to ensure researcher safety and wellbeing when working overseas ***

If you are travelling overseas to conduct research outside the UK, you should consider if there are any local systems in place to support you as a researcher about issues such as researcher safety, disclosures of matters of concern, and systems for debriefing if researching potentially sensitive topics. Mechanisms should be in place to ensure researchers overseas have a check-in process with supervisors or line managers.

Researchers are advised to regularly check the [British Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) website for more information and travel advice when planning to travel to a research site outside the United Kingdom.

- **Has this study received any other approval from any other regulatory bodies in the country of the intended research site? ***

For some research projects, especially clinical studies, securing other approvals may be necessary before you can commence your research project. It is the researcher's responsibility to check what research approvals are required before submitting an application for ethical review.

Data Management

This section asks you to explain what data you will be collecting and how you plan to store, protect and destroy the data you collected.

Things to consider:

- Overseas countries will have their own legal frameworks for data protection rights. Your ethics applications should provide details for the country where the research will be conducted and assurances of how these will be managed. Researchers are responsible for finding out what local data protection requirements are and detailing an understanding of these in your application. [Data Protection Laws of the World](#) is a useful online source. UK data protection laws might be more robust than those in the country in which you are collecting data. When data is collected and/or transferred outside of the UK, if the country concerned does not have any data protection legislation or this is known to have weaker than UK requirements, researchers should, at a minimum, comply with established GDPR principles.
- Research data should be uploaded and stored on the University server or Office 365 as soon as possible. Physical data collection should be stored securely and where necessary stored in a locked cabinet.
- Data acquired in undergraduate or taught postgraduate projects will typically not be retained. The Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that any personal research data collected during such project is deleted.
- Only members of the research team should have access to the data.
- Supervisors should have access to student research data.

This section will also ask about the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and the research data collected. You must provide sufficient detail of the process of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and how this process will be communicated with participants.

Governance

This section of the form will ask you about other governance permissions. You must read the information carefully as you might need further approvals or guidance from other departments in the University.

Attachments

Staff and students should attach the relevant documents to the application before submitting it for approval. This includes recruitment advertisements, risk assessments, consent forms, participant information sheets, research tools, application forms and approvals from an external committee.

Submission

Please ensure you have read all the relevant policies and procedures listed in the submission checklist before selecting 'Submit'. Supervisors will have to review and sign of the student application before it is submitted to the relevant committee for review.

