Research Ethics Review Process – Applicant, Supervisor, Reviewer and Chair Guidance

All applications and accompanying documentation for research ethics review need to be submitted via the Research Ethics Submission (MS) Form (as do any updates of external ethical approval).

This will populate a Research Ethics SharePoint list. This list is the hub for all reviews, enabling assignment to reviewers, reviewer feedback inc. chair input supporting activity towards FEO.

Timelines

We still have the review timeframe within **4-6 weeks** from reviewer allocation to FEO.

From application submission to initial review should, assuming complete documentation, be within 1-2 working days of submission. This timeframe will be monitored but the 4-6 weeks to FEO assumes complete documentation so the measure until FEO will be from reviewer allocation (which equate to completion of initial submission checks).

Reviewers have a **3-week initial review** timeframe with the clock beginning once the administrative team initiate the reviewer allocation process (i.e. as soon as the reviewer is selected for a particular application). Factoring in, if needed, 1 week for applicants to respond and a further week for secondary review and then FEO. Some time is also built in to allow the administrative team to inform applicant of request, and update documentation.

Repeated requirement for review means the 4-6 weeks timeframe would no longer be applicable, though we will all attempt to reach FEO in a reasonable timeframe.

- **3 weeks** to initial review (started as soon as application has passed initial checklist)
  - FEO (within 4 weeks, normally sooner) or queries to applicant
- **1 week** for applicants to respond
- **1 week** for reviewers to update
  - FEO within 6 weeks, normally sooner

The administrative team will provide regular metric reports to oversee activity vs timeframes.

Applicant Guidance

- Access to documentation
  - UG/PGT students access the guidance, template documentation via website (https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/research/ethics/process.aspx) and Research Ethics Submission Form via their dissertation Moodle page.
  - Staff/PGRs access the guidance, template documentation and Research Ethics Submission Form via the website (https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/research/ethics/pgr-staff.aspx)
- Submission of documentation
  - For all applicant's submission of application and accompanying documentation for ethical review (or for notification of external ethical review approval) must be via the Research Ethics Submission Form (link via Moodle / website).
  - Completion of the Research Ethics Submission Form allows effective triage of your application and enables the applicant to upload all relevant documentation.

    - UG/PGT applicants must work with their supervisor and agree submission documentation.
- Submission checks
    - The administrative team will check your submission for completeness. If incomplete (e.g. the consent forms are missing), the submission will be rejected, and you will be invited to re-submit with an indication of what documentation is missing.
    - For UG/PGT submissions, once checks are complete we will request supervisor approval.
- Review process
    - The school administration team will allocate your submission to 1 or 2 reviewers, depending on the nature of the application.
    - Following review more information may be required. The administrative team will contact you with details.
    - Once FEO is provided the administrative team will send through a PDF version of the approval. Please keep this for your records.
- Communications
    - The administrative team will attempt to keep the applicant informed of progress. During busy times this may not be possible.
    - We are looking at automated approaches to support on-going updates as the status of your application changes.
    - Let us know if you withdraw your application

Reviewer Guidance

- Allocation of reviews
    - Reviewer allocation is done via the Research Ethics SharePoint list (which tracks all submissions). Reviewer selection is based primarily on 'next-in-line', or in the case of UG pool, each reviewer will receive a set number of applications. The review timelines are as indicated above.
        - Note: the updated allocation process assumes that the application has been allocated and the 'review' clock has started. It is the responsibility of the reviewer to accept/decline the review in a timely manner – the team will not chase individual reviewers. If unable to review, the clock will not stop, but the administrative team will re-allocate that application. It is imperative that reviewers make that initial assessment promptly.
- Accessing the SharePoint list and documentation (
    - **Note** that applicants will not be able to access the SharePoint list, so any comments would be reviewer:applicant anonymous)
    - All activity is within the Research Ethics SharePoint list where you can initially indicate if you are able / unable to review.
    - To review, all documents can be accessed via the Research Ethics SharePoint list and outcomes plus comments can be made directly onto the Research Ethics SharePoint list
        - Click on the link and the panel will open up
        - Open documents for review, including RSF by scrolling to the bottom of the panel and click on each document to view it

        - Update RSF directly (this will save your changes in real time), add comments to the 'Reviewer Comments' box and pick outcome from the 'Reviewer Outcome' drop-down
        - Ensure that any comments are made **before** choosing your final outcome as this will trigger the automation process
    - Review outcomes include:
        - FEO
        - More information required (reviewer to provide details)
        - Refer to REIC Chair (reviewer to provide details)
    - If more information is required, we will update you when the applicant has provided that information.
    - If there are 2 reviewers, the administrative team will await the outcome from both reviewers before proceeding. If one reviewer provides FEO and the other requests 'more information' or 'refer to REIC chair', the team will request additional information or 'refer to REIC chair'. Updating both reviewers.
    - We will look to schedule an automatic reminder if a review is still outstanding, along with more general updates to the forum but we will not chase reviewers unless necessary.
    - Please note, all staff/PGR submissions will also have final review by the REIC Chair
- Communications
    - The administrative team will not individually chase reviewers. Again, it is the reviewer's responsibility to work towards/within the review timeframe.
    - The administrative team will provide updates on review metrics and timelines via the Reviewer Teams site (Research Ethics Forum), e.g. number of submissions received, number reviewed, number outstanding and timeframes.

Supervisor Guidance

You will be supporting your UG/PGT student to submit their ethics application and documentation for review. As part of the submission, we ask the student to identify their supervisor. Once the submission is received this will automatically trigger an email and link to be sent to the supervisor. The supervisor should follow instructions and there are 3 possible outcomes to the activity:

- 'Yes' – this indicates your support.
    - The administrative team will proceed to reviewer allocation
- 'Attention Required' – this indicates your support, but you consider the application to have complex elements. Please also leave a comment to assist the reviewer. Ensure you have added your comments **before** choosing the outcome as this drives the automation process.
    - The administrative team will proceed to reviewer allocation
- No – this is indicating you do not support the submission
    - The administrative team will reject the application updating the student

Any students who are carrying out **fieldwork off-campus** will need to complete a 'Fieldwork Record and Personal Details Form' with reference to a standard generic risk assessment. They should share that with you.

If the trip is **outside the UK**, please refer the case to the LQ-SSP-Operations inbox for additional support.

Remember to please make the ethics inbox aware if your student withdraws their application

Chair Guidance

The chair is a reviewer, but it is also possible for any reviewer to 'Refer to the Chair' if they feel the submission has complexity that requires Chair support. If this option is chosen by the reviewer, the Chair will be automatically informed, and a review link sent. They then chose the outcome of review as indicated in the reviewer guidance.

All Staff/PGR submission will be allocated to the Chair following initial review and approval from the reviewer(s).

Administrative Support

Approach:

- Team-based approach within the Core Operations / RKE team.
  - Oversight from Gill / Mat
  - Coordinating role from SOO RKE (to be appointed)– working with Gill / Mat to ensure process effectiveness, automation developments, metrics & reporting, housekeeping of the inbox and on-going support for REIC
  - Rota of support for the managing of the inbox / processing of applications from SOO RKE (to be appointed), Alex, Mubee and Rob along with any necessary communications (see below). Rota to be shared on the Research Ethics Forum. During peak times the rota will include more resource.
  - Maintain and update sources of information
- The inbox will not be monitored 24/7 but will be monitored at regular intervals throughout the week – blocks of time work better for this type of process, rather than dipping in and out.
- All email correspondence from APM colleagues will be from the RE inbox.
- We will aim to complete the initial triage of applications within 2-3 working days of receipt, on average.
- We will begin to allocate reviewers within that same period, assuming submission is considered as complete.
- Aim to provide status updates to applicants – initially via email at each stage, then include into automation. This will not be possible during UG review period, or if greater than 25 applications are expected.
- The administrative team will not individually chase reviewers. Again, it is the reviewer's responsibility to work towards/within the review timeframe.
- The administrative team will provide updates on review metrics and timelines via the Reviewer Teams site, Research Ethics Forum, e.g. number of submissions received, number reviewed, number outstanding and timeframes.
- Anonymity – maintain applicant/reviewer anonymity only.

This guidance will be reviewed and updated annually, and/or as the process develops and adapts.

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