# Example research ethics initial checklist

An ethics checklist should be completed for every research project. It is used to identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted. Below is an example of a checklist that could be used in a UK research organisation to initially determine the potential level of risk or harm within a proposed study (research organisations may have their own checklist that should be used for submitting proposals to their institutional research ethics committee).

This checklist is only an example. Please refer to your research organisations’ code of practice on ethical standards for research involving human participants. The principal investigator or, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.

An appropriate checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project details** | | | | | |
| Project title |  | | | | |
| **Applicant details** | | | | | |
| Name of researcher (applicant) |  | | | | |
| Role |  | | | | |
| Contact address |  | | | | |
| Email |  | | | | |
| Telephone |  | | | | |
| **For students only** | | | | | |
| Module name and number or MA/MPhil course and department |  | | | | |
| Supervisor’s or module leader’s name |  | | | | |
| **Research ethics initial checklist** | | | | | |
| Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box: | | | | | |
|  | | | | Yes | No |
| *Research that may need to be reviewed by NHS Research Ethics Committee or another external Ethics Committee (if yes, please give brief details as an annex)* | | | | | |
| Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data or premises and/or equipment? | | | |  |  |
| Does the study involve participants age 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent?  (eg people with learning disabilities: see Mental Capacity Act 2005 / Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. All research that falls under the auspices MCA/AWI must be reviewed by NHS REC) | | | |  |  |
| *Research that may need a full review* | | | | | |
| Does the research involve potentially vulnerable groups: children, those with cognitive impairment, or those in unequal relationships? (eg your own students) | | | |  |  |
| Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (eg students at school, members of self- help group, residents of nursing home?) | | | |  |  |
| Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (eg covert observation of people in non- public places) | | | |  |  |
| Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? (eg sexual activity, drug use, politics) | | | |  |  |
| Are drugs, placebos or other substances (eg food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? | | | |  |  |
| Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants? | | | |  |  |
| Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? | | | |  |  |
| Could the study induce psychological stress, discomfort, anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? | | | |  |  |
| Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing? | | | |  |  |
| Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use? | | | |  |  |
| Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question? (eg in international research: locally employed research assistants) | | | |  |  |
| Does the research involve members of the public in a research capacity (participant research)? | | | |  |  |
| Will the research take place outside the UK? | | | |  |  |
| Will the research involve respondents to the internet or other visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified? | | | |  |  |
| Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given? | | | |  |  |
| Will financial recompense be offered to participants? | | | |  |  |
|  | | | | | |
| **Principal Investigator** | | | | | |
| Signed: | | Date: |  | | |
| **Supervisor or module leader** (where appropriate) | | | | | |
| Signed: | | Date: |  | | |

It is a researcher’s responsibility to follow the research organisation’s code of practice on ethical standards, and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of their study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the faculty or school research ethics officer and may require a new application for ethics approval.