

ETHICS GUIDANCE

ETHICAL CATEGORIES

CATEGORY 0

Category 0 projects are non-hazardous; do not employ participants and use only existing material publicly and legally available in the UK. They do not meet the criteria for Category A or B.

CATEGORY A

Category A projects usually involve the participation of people, rather than secondary data sources such as published memoirs etc., but are not deemed hazardous to the physical or psychological welfare of the participant or the investigator. They do not employ vulnerable individuals, in the context of the specific research, or investigate issues likely to give grounds for offence. If a project appears to be a borderline case of category B it should be deemed to be category B in the first instance. A Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC) may subsequently determine it to be category A if it is required in pursuit of a professional qualification and carried out under suitable close supervision. Category A projects may be carried out by undergraduates and students, with appropriate training, on other courses below degree level but a first degree in an appropriate subject, or other relevant professional recognition, is a minimum requirement for carrying out category B projects.

CATEGORY B projects involve any of the following

In category B proposals there is likely to be significant physical intervention between the researcher and the participants. This includes the use of any procedure (including administering of questionnaires or interviews on sensitive issues) that could cause psychological harm or suffering to the participants. In such cases, the participants' vulnerability is determined in relation to the methods and content of the research project rather than by an assumption of being 'at risk'.

- Any research involving covert procedures.
- Research that may be offensive. Also, research that is contentious in the sense that it may bring the university into disrepute.
- Research that requires access to, or creates, data about individuals of a highly confidential nature.
- Research involving participants who, within the context of the study to be undertaken, are considered to be vulnerable. Projects with vulnerable individuals may be designated category A if it is clear that the vulnerability of the individual is likely to be unaffected by participation in the study.
- Research that requires the administration of certain substances.
- Research that requires the approval of another ethics committee will usually be designated category B. Similarly, research requiring data collection abroad, especially if the supervisor remains in the UK, will usually require scrutiny by a Faculty Ethics Committee.

Participants (and/or their parents/carers in the case of young people under 18 years of age) must be informed of the nature of the research project and a means of consent must be obtained. Undergraduates will not be permitted to undertake category B projects.

Updating ethical approval

If for any reason after ethical approval has been granted the research proposal changes significantly the student must immediately inform and seek advice from their supervisor. The changes may result in revised ethical approval being sought.