NTU Research Ethics Policy & Procedure

Version: 5.0
Date: October 2021

Version number and approval date	Approved by	Amendment
Version: 2.0 Date: 07/10/2015	URC	No changes made.
Version: 3.0 Date: 19/10/2016	URC	Several minor changes were made, focusing principally on the specific referencing of the Professional Doctorate Research Ethics Committee.
Version: 4.0 Date: 11/12/2018	URC	Key updates adopted to incorporate sector best practice and recommendations from the UK Research Integrity Office.
Version: 5.0 Date: 12/10/2021	URC	Updates made to sections 3 and 4 to reflect new terms of reference, constitution and standard operating procedures of research ethics committees. Inclusion of detail on the University's research-related position on responsibilities in relation to the Prevent Duty.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to establish and promote the highest possible standards of ethical practice in the conduct of academic research.

1.1.2 The University is committed to protecting the rights, dignity, safety and privacy of research subjects, the wellbeing of animals and ensuring the protection of the environment. It is also concerned that risks to the health and safety of researchers is minimised and their academic freedom is maintained.

1.1.3 Specifically the policy & procedure aims to provide:

1.1.3.1 an over-arching framework of principles designed to promote a quality research culture, where excellence is promoted and key elements such as effective leadership, openness, accountability and honesty, are maintained and enhanced;

1.1.3.2 clarity about internal procedures and structures the University has in place to review its practices and activities in relation to research.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This policy applies to all those conducting research within, or on behalf of the University, including staff, persons holding honorary University appointments, visiting researchers, undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research students (including visiting scholars and students).

1.2.2 In cases where a research project is being conducted by academics from more than one institution, it is expected that the relevant ethical clearance for the project is sought from the lead institution (normally the institution at which the Principal Investigator is employed) and that other partner institutions are informed of outcomes and issues.

2.   General Principles

2.1 The University requires ethical review of all research projects involving primary research with human beings (or their data), irrespective of funding source. It also requires service evaluation and audit to be subjected to ethical review.

2.2 In the majority of cases, a review would be undertaken by an NTU Research Ethics Committee. However, in some instances this may be undertaken by external research ethics committees, such as those operated by the NHS, as appropriate.

2.3 In cases where research is being conducted outside of the UK researchers falling under the scope of this policy must also adhere to any legal and ethical requirements relating to the country/institution in which they are working.

2.4 The University has put in place additional measures to review research focusing on subjects where there is the potential to attract the attention of third-party investigations into the conduct of the researcher, such as research on terrorism or extremism. The forms part of the approach to supporting the University's

Prevent duty under Section 26(1) of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

2.5   For certain types of research (e.g. certain types of research involving the NHS), external ethics committees already exist to consider research proposals. Their use for such research is compulsory. In such cases, neither University Research Ethics Committees nor the University Research Committee is empowered to give the research proposal ethical approval.

2.6   All projects involving living persons, human tissues, or data or tissues relating to recently deceased persons, or animals (including animals living in their natural habitat) should have a serious research, educational or training purpose.

2.7   All research involving human participants, human material or human data requires ethical review and receipt of favourable opinion. The requirement for ethical review does not include research where information about human participants is publicly and lawfully available (for example census data, population statistics published by government departments, court reports and personal letters/diaries in public libraries).

2.8   The University has a *Code of Practice for Research* which includes a set of fundamental principles to ensure the protection of human participants. This Code of Practice for Research can be found here:

https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/research-environment-and-governance/governance-and-integrity

The University requires that all research falling within the scope of this policy satisfies these principles and the Code of Practice.

2.9   As well as the University's own policies, committees and sub-committees must take into account relevant professional ethical codes and the policies of research sponsors. In cases where it can be demonstrated that there exists a difference in ethical standards between the University's policy and those of the relevant professional body or research sponsor, committees shall apply whichever is considered the highest standard of ethical practice.

3.   Role of Research Ethics Committees

3.1   Such sub-committees (research ethics committees) as established by the University Research Committee shall promote the University Research Ethics Policy & Procedure and ensure research adheres to this.

3.2   Terms of reference and constitutions of research ethics committees in operation at NTU are available on the research integrity section of the University's intranet.

3.3   Relevant School Associate Deans for Research or Research Operations can provide guidance on the most appropriate research ethics committee to which applications should be submitted.

4.   Research Ethics Committees Operating Procedures

4.1   Applications for ethical approval

4.1.1   Research ethics committees operate under a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs), which include:

4.1.1.1 Principles of research ethics;

4.1.1.2 Guidance on which type of research requires an ethics opinion and to which committee research should be submitted;

4.1.1.3 Details of the review process operated by research ethics committees, including an appeals process;

4.1.1.4 Criteria used to assess applications submitted to research ethics committees;

4.1.2   Research ethics committee standard operating procedures are available on the research integrity section of the University's website.

5.   Governance

5.1   The University Research Committee (URC), chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor - Research and Innovation and reporting to the Academic Board, maintains overall responsibility for the development and monitoring of this policy and associated procedures.

5.2   The University Research Committee may delegate various elements of these responsibilities to one or more sub-committees, in keeping with the University's structures.

5.3   Document review

5.3.1   The Policy and Procedure will be reviewed by the URC in association with the trade unions, and appropriate research committees in response to statutory changes, changes in University procedures or structures or as a result of the monitoring of the application of the procedure.

5.3.2   In any event, the Policy and Procedure will be reviewed every two years.