Ethics: A Guide for Doctoral Students

This Guide highlights the University's policy and processes on ethics for doctoral researchers.

As a doctoral researcher at the University, you must ensure that your research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards.

All doctoral students must obtain full ethical approval before commencing data collection. All research projects must be assessed through the Ethics@Bath system.

Information on the Ethics@Bath system, including how research projects are assessed and how to obtain full ethical approval, can be found on the Research Integrity and Ethics page and on the Ethics at Bath SharePoint site.

Failure to comply with the University's research governance may prevent you from progressing with your program of research.

It is your and your supervisor's responsibility to ensure that all processes, and any subsequent applications requiring committee-level review, are completed in good time.

It is also your responsibility to instigate discussions with your supervisor to re-evaluate ethical issues should the nature of your research change, or should your own circumstances change, during the course of your doctorate and, if necessary, submit the relevant research ethics amendment.

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As well as considering the ethical implications of your research on others, it is also important to reflect on how the nature of your research may adversely affect you, known as Vicarious Trauma (VT) (and associated conditions). Indirect exposure to this trauma can produce a wide variety of symptoms of distress. Read more about Vicarious Trauma and how to prepare for and mitigate the risk.

Each department has a Departmental Research Ethics Officer who can provide local advice.

Ethics consideration at the start of your studies

(For those on programs commencing with a taught stage, ethics consideration may be delayed until the commencement of the research stage, or when data may be collected during the taught stage – whichever is soonest.)

During the Candidature stage, you are required to provide evidence of how you have commenced considering ethics and of any appropriate actions that have been identified. You are also expected to have started a form on the ethics@bath system.

Information on how to consider ethics and the actions that might be required is available on the University's research integrity and ethics page.

You must cite on your Candidature form which websites* you have consulted and whether you and your supervisor think that full ethical approval may be required. Failure to provide sufficient evidence may result in delays in approving Candidature. [*website might include relevant external public, professional, or funding bodies' webpages.]

Ethics consideration during your studies

Completion of the Ethics@Bath system and, where necessary, obtaining appropriate formal ethical committee approval, must both be completed, and evidence provided, by either of the following deadlines (whichever is soonest):

•   Before any data collection or research occurs.

Or

•   Confirmation, for PhD students (where applicable).

•   The end of the first year of your research stage for the DBA in Higher Education Management, Doctorate in Health (DHealth), Doctorate in Policy Research & Practice (DPRP) and the Doctorate in Education (EdD).

Certain funders, such as Research Councils, may have additional expectations regarding ethical approval and so it is essential that you check with them or with your relevant University contacts.

Confirmation

If ethical approval has only been obtained for part of the project at this stage, the supervisor must state the reasons for this on the confirmation form and the date by which it will be obtained.

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