A Policy
Regarding the Ethical Approval and Research Integrity of Projects Undertaken by Students and Staff of
DN Colleges Group.

This Policy has been recognised and covered by DN College's Indemnity Insurance

v.2.09.2025

Table of Contents:

Aim and Description 3

1. Introduction 4
2. Definitions 4
3. The Purpose of Ethical Authorisation/Approval 7
4. General Principles for Student-Researchers 8
5. General Principles for Staff-Researchers 9
6. Research Ethics and Principles 11
7. Ethical Issues for Consideration in the Preparation of Applications 13
8. Ethical Issues related to the Conduct of a Research Project 19
9. Ethical Issues relating to the Dissemination of Results 20
10. Ethical Approval and Authorisation 20
11. Local Authorisation 23
12. Institutional Level Approval 25
13. Monitoring and Review 26
14. Ethical Misconduct 27
15. Guide for Use of Animal Unit 28
16. Research Guidelines and Publications 28

Aim and Description:

This document outlines the structures, processes and procedures that must be adhered to when staff and students undertake research projects, major coursework or any form of activity that requires ethical approval.

The Policy allows DN Colleges Group (DNCG) to assure itself that its requirements for ethical approval reflect its commitment to good ethical practice, as a principle in itself and as a means of maintaining public confidence in the work of its staff and students. Here, research at both campuses complies with the requirements of the BERA guidelines (2024).

For further advice and guidance on the Policy, contact should be made with the Chair of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee, Dr Darryn Stamp [Darryn.stamp@dncolleges.ac.uk]

Further references to other sources of information can be found at the end of this document.

1. Introduction

1.1. This Policy defines the structures and processes through which ethical approval must be obtained and the processes through which researchers of DNCG (the institution) must seek to acquire authorisation or approval.

1.2. The term ‘research project’ is used within the context of this Policy as an umbrella term relating to:

1.2.1. Any form of major student coursework (e.g., the final year dissertation) that requires primary research and/or ethical approval.

1.2.2. Any form of staff research that depends upon primary research.

1.2.3. Any form of research that involves the use of animals.

2. Definitions

2.1. Research: a form of disciplined enquiry which aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory through primary or secondary research. This may apply to general coursework assignments, but will apply, in every instance, to final year dissertations or projects and to all projects conducted by members of staff that match the criteria as outlined here.

2.2. Primary Research: a form of disciplined enquiry which aims to contribute to the body of knowledge or theories through the collection of qualitative or quantitative data through methods such as: interviews, focus groups, telephone conversations, questionnaires, photography or artistic activity involving human participants and/or subjects; in addition to primary experimentation / research with non-human participants. The methods listed here are a collection of examples only and do not constitute an exhaustive decisive inventory regarding the necessity to apply for ethical approval.

2.3. Secondary Research: a form of research that encompasses such activities as literature reviews and/or a collection or synthesis of existing research (but not including ‘human or animal subject’ data).

2.4. The Researcher: any member of academic staff of the institution, any undergraduate or postgraduate student enrolled on a course provided by the institution or any third party carrying out research activity at DNCG.

2.5. Research Ethics: universal, underlying and socially accepted/expected principles guiding the planning and conduct of research, the publication of outcomes, and post-project care and/or disposal of records or materials.

2.6. Human Participants:

2.6.1. living human beings (although this includes embryos, foetuses, human tissues and body parts, it is important to remain aware of the exclusive responsibility of the NHS-review-procedures here.);

2.6.2. human beings who have recently died, including cadavers, human remains and body parts;

2.6.3. collective organisations as far as human interaction (with each other of with objects) is concerned as for example within companies, corporations or community groups.

2.7. Human Subjects: subject(s) of data and records which have been collected and stored as a record at individual level - for example; medical, genetic, financial, personnel, criminal and administrative records; and test results including educational achievements.

2.8. Animal Participants: Research projects which involve the use of animals at DNCG are subject to stringent ethical review. DNCG is committed to, wherever possible using the three R's:

2.8.1. Replace: replacing the use of animals with alternative techniques or avoid the use of animals altogether

2.8.2. Reduce: reducing the number of animals used, to obtain information from fewer animals or more information from the same number of animals.

2.8.3. Refine: refining the way experiments are undertaken, to make sure animals suffer as little as possible. This includes better housing and

improvement procedures which minimise pain and suffering and/or improve animal welfare.

2.9. The Supervisor: supervisors are responsible for the monitoring of approved research project and/or applications to ensure compliance with the project/proposal as approved and within the constraints of imposed conditions. Supervisors are also responsible to ensure a revised authorisation in the light of further developments regarding the original proposal. A supervisor may also be a nominated Independent Reviewer.

2.10. The Independent Reviewer: a suitably qualified and experienced individual appointed within each Programme authorised to provide ethical authorisation at local (i.e. programme) level without the need for a full DNCG Research Ethics Committee review.

2.11. DNCG Research Ethics Committee: this is the board making the ultimate decision regarding the request for ethical approval as they are directed towards the board either by the Research Ethics Independent Reviewers or by the deliberate decision of the researcher. DNCG's Research Ethics Committee's decisions are to be reached independently. DNCG's Research Ethics Committee is comprised of:

- a suitably qualified and experienced Chair
- a selection of Independent Reviewers
- a member of staff for administrative support, filing and record-keeping.

2.12. Research Ethics Application Forms: these forms ensure that the researcher has demonstrated sufficient ethical consideration of the proposed project. The relevant forms must be completed with any application that is submitted. These forms include:

2.12.1. E1 – must be completed for all secondary research studies.

2.12.2. E2 – must be completed for all primary research studies with adult participants.

2.12.3. E3 – must be completed for all primary research studies with participants who are either under the age of 18 or require consent from a parent/legal guardian (i.e. vulnerable participants).

2.12.4. E4 – must be completed for all primary research studies with a combination of participants who are adults and under the age of 18 or require consent from a parent/legal (i.e. vulnerable participants).

2.12.5. EA – must be completed for all studies that involve animals.

2.12.6. EM – must be completed by all module leaders where students within a module will carry out the same research task using the same research method with internal/external stakeholders. The module will then be approved through the Ethics panel.

3. The Purpose of Ethical Authorisation and Approval

3.1 The provisions for ethical approval assist staff as researchers and/or supervisors to identify potentially critical issues and to address them in the structuring of a research project.

3.2 As a process designed to promote good practice, the outcomes of ethical approval are formally reported to the approval-seeking researcher. This is supposed to inform the researcher's emerging practice in relation to the generally accepted conventions within their academic disciplines.

3.3 The approval process itself acts as a safeguard to any approval-seeking research, providing clarity regarding the ethical propriety of the research project once it has been approved.

4. General Principles for Student-Researchers

4.1 The importance of maintaining public confidence in the ethical quality of approved research conducted by students of the institution is a key institutional priority.

4.2 All research carried out at all levels of study must be conducted according to rigorous ethical standards.

4.3 Any research undertaken by students must comply with the legal requirements of the United Kingdom, and/or the country of location of the research.

4.4 Where statutory, professional, regulatory or other bodies may have requirements, these must be met before a research project can be authorised or approved.

4.5 Students must be fully informed of the relevant research ethics requirements of the institution and (if appropriate) those of any statutory, professional or regulatory body.

4.6 Students are expected to take responsibility for familiarising themselves with relevant research guidelines that will be signposted to students by dissertation supervisors.

4.7 Students apply for formal ethical approval via their allocated Independent Reviewer. The Independent Reviewer decides if approval can be granted on local or Institutional level. The Independent Reviewers can fully approve proposals deemed to be low-risk and can make conditional approval based on the recommendations of individual supervisors if some aspects of the proposal need minor amendments. The student's supervisors are responsible for safeguarding adherence to these conditions. Proposals that do not meet the above criteria are to be forwarded to DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

4.8 DNCG's Research Ethics Committee meets at least five times per year to discuss requests for institutional approval and to record final sign off for all applications. DNCG's Research Ethics Committee can approve, conditionally approve and refuse approval. The decisions are binding and the student's supervisors are responsible for safeguarding the adherence to any conditional approval.

5. General Principles for Staff-Researchers

5.1. This section concerns research activities of the academic employees of the institution and includes employees with a permanent or temporary contractual affiliation or within a casual work agreement.

5.2. Research activities can either be scholarly and / or commercial.

5.3. Activities which only evaluate facts about existing services or state of affairs (Audits or Service-evaluations) are not deemed to be research in this respect and are not the focus of this Policy.

5.4. The safeguarding of the ethical conduct of scholarly research falls into the responsibility of the researcher.

5.5. The following cases require special consideration to be made by the researcher:

5.5.1. Research activities which are subject to any other and/or more specialised ethical review process are only reviewed under this Policy in a subsidiary way if the more specialised review-board has decided not to review the proposal in question (e.g. NHS Research Ethics Committee).

5.5.2. Research activities undertaken by academic employees of the institution as part of the employee's own educational qualifications, are to be reviewed according to the Policy of this employee's educational provider.

5.5.3. Research activities which are part of a collaborative effort of more than one scholar, affiliated to different institutions, must reach a decision among themselves according to which institute's Ethical Policy they will engage in an ethics review process.

5.6. Decisions made without a direct – deciding – involvement of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee remain the entire responsibility of the researcher.

5.7. For the purpose of this Policy, an employed researcher of the institution, undertaking contracted commercial research is referred to as the consultant researcher.

5.7.1. The responsibility for the ethical conduct of commercial research, undertaken by a consultant researcher, rests in general, with the funding entity.

5.7.2. If, however, the consultant researcher is actively engaging in the design of the research and hence encounters the need to exert due ethical considerations to safeguard ethical conduct, the consultant researcher is bound to follow the same tripartite system as the scholarly researcher (see point 5.5 ff. of this section).

5.7.3. As in the case of scholarly research, the consultant researcher can, at any stage submit to DNCG's Research Ethics Committee to gain ethical approval.

5.7.4. Decisions made without a direct – deciding – involvement of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee remain the entire responsibility of the consultant researcher.

6. Research Ethics and Principles

6.1 Research must be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, value and quality.

6.2 The results of research should strive to benefit society either directly or by generally improving human knowledge and understanding.

6.3 All research projects must aim to avoid or minimise harm to groups and individuals whilst respecting and protecting human and civil rights.

6.4 Researchers and participants or subjects should be reasonably informed about the purpose, methods, and intended possible use of the research.

6.5. The interests of research participants and research subjects should be considered at all stages of the research project. In particular, the following should be observed:

6.5.1. Participants must be no worse off as a result of their participation in the project.

6.5.2. Participation must be on the basis of informed consent, either by the person and/or his or her legal guardian using language that is understandable to research participants.

6.5.3. Provisions for withdrawal from the project must be in place;

6.5.4. The interests of children, vulnerable adults and other vulnerable groups (e.g., prisoners) must be given specific consideration;

6.5.5. Participants must not be subjected to undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment or other harm. Normally, the risk of harm must be no greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal lifestyles. Here, participants must be asked about any factors in the procedure that may create a risk, such as pre-existing medical conditions, and must be advised of any special action that they should take to avoid risk.

6.6 The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects must be respected, except where the requirements of professional practice determine necessary safe-guarding and legal action. Issues of anonymity and anonymisation of results must be fully considered, and where personal disclosure or identification is likely, this must be discussed with the subjects or participants and their specific consent to this obtained.

6.7. The researcher must ensure that the research methodology is appropriate and consistent with their current level of skills and abilities associated with the role as academic investigator. Research designs must be such as to maximise a project's utility and relevance for the benefit of society.

6.8. Research outcomes should be disseminated in a manner which makes them accessible.

6.9. The independence of the research outcomes must be ensured. External sources of funding and any potential conflict of interest must be declared during the approval process.

6.10. The research culture will be characterised by respect for all groups in society, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion and culture, and with respect for, and awareness of, age, gender or other significant social differences.

6.11. The health and safety of both researcher and participants/subjects must be carefully considered in the design and execution of any research projects.

7. Ethical Issues for Consideration in the Preparation of Applications

7.1 The following are ethical considerations which should be taken into account in the preparation of a research project involving human participants, human subjects or animals. These are not exhaustive, and Statutory, Professional, Regulatory and other bodies may have other requirements, which the researcher should consult whilst preparing the project.

7.2. Researchers submitting applications for authorisation or approval must describe the project, its aims and explain the procedure which will be carried out in relation to participants and/or subjects.

7.3. The application will include an assessment of risk. It is important that researchers identify, in so far as they can, both the nature of any potential risks of the proposed project; and how such risks will be managed and

minimised through the research strategy and protocols used. Whilst the extent of risk and its management may not be possible for a full assessment at the inception stage, projections are integral to the ethical standing of the project and its approval. Should the project encounter further ethical issues as it develops, additional approval should be sought at the appropriate level.

7.4. In respect of participants or subjects this should include:

7.4.1. Assessment (if relevant) of health-related issues like physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress.

7.4.2. Consideration of societal factors, for example risks to a person's social standing, privacy, personal values and beliefs, relations with family and friends and community, and work-related effects.

7.4.3. Any disclosures relating to illegality, for example drug-use, sexuality and sexual practices, or deviant behaviour should have a very careful consideration of risk to the participant/subject; and the nature of the final research report should also address issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

7.4.4. Consideration of animal welfare throughout the project

7.5 In respect to the researcher this should include:

7.5.1. Assessment of any specific health and safety provisions which would be required (e.g. laboratory experiments), relating both to physical and mental health.

7.5.2. Assessment of whether the researchers have the appropriate experience, including training in questioning and reporting on sensitive issues, to undertake the project.

7.5.3. A judgment as to whether the researcher is a lone-researcher and the suitability of protocols planned to ensure the researcher's safety

7.5.4. Identification of whether the research involves participant, non-participant or animal observation (if relevant)

7.5.5. Identification of whether the proposed project is occluded or covert (if relevant). These are projects where full information to the participant would invalidate the research or would be meaningless.

Where such research projects are envisaged the researcher should consult extensively with the members of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee or other experienced individuals. All requests for ethical approval for occluded research projects must be referred to DNCG's Research Ethics Committee for consideration of approval.

7.5.6. The broad principle for covert projects is that they must not be undertaken lightly or routinely and should never deceive research participants about significant aspects that may affect their willingness to participate, such as physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences. They should be seen as highly exceptional and only justified if important issues are being addressed and if matters of social significance which cannot be uncovered in other ways are likely to be discovered. Requests for ethical approval for covert research projects must be referred to DNCG Research Ethics Committee for consideration of approval.

7.6. In general, the following principles are adopted:

7.6.1. Withholding of information from participants should only occur when the researcher is clear that the aims and objectives of the research cannot be achieved, and the welfare of the participants/animals assured, by any other means.

7.6.2. Debriefing should follow participation as a matter of course.

7.6.3. Where deception has been substantial, the participant should be offered the option of withholding the data in accordance with the principle of participation by informed consent. If scientific or humane values justify delaying or withholding this information, researchers must take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of harm.

7.7. All ethics applications for research projects must state whether the proposed project involves consent from any external bodies and identify these.

7.8. Applications must state how the selection of participants/ subjects will be considered and how the researchers will assure DNCG that this participation is voluntary. If it is intended that payments will be made, details of these payments and a rationale must be required. Researchers shall not offer inappropriate financial or other inducements to obtain research participants, particularly when it may coerce participation or bring risk beyond that which they risk without payment in their normal lifestyle.

7.9. Applications must state how the participant will be given sufficient information of the aims, methods, sources of funding of the project and the proposed use of the study. This should be included in the participant information sheet and include the right for participants to withdraw at any time.

7.10. Applications must state how informed consent will be obtained. Consent must also be obtained from research participants prior to filming or recording them in any form, unless the research involves simply naturalistic observations in public places and it is not anticipated the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm. Studies based upon observation must respect the privacy and well-being of the participants and particular account should be taken of any belief systems or local cultural values and the possibility of intruding upon the privacy of individuals who, even when in a normally public place, may believe that they are unobserved. If consent will not be in written form, the justification for this should be included and full details of how consent will be provided. A draft consent form must be included in the application which makes it clear that consent is informed consent.

7.11. If the study involves children or vulnerable adults the application must specify what specific provisions will be put in place and how informed consent will be obtained and from whom. A draft consent form must be included in the application. If relevant, the researcher must make clear, if relevant, whether a Disclosure and Barring Service clearance has been obtained.

7.12. If the study involves animals the application must specify the provisions that will be in place to maintain the animals' welfare.

7.13. Applications must state how confidentiality and anonymity of participants/subjects will be secured. This may include consideration of circumstances in which the requirements of professional practice might impact on confidentiality and anonymity provisions. The application must state if there are any limits to participant confidentiality, the rationale and possible outcomes. These include the collection of data by means of cameras, tape recorders and other data-gathering devices, as well as data collected in face-to-face interviews or in participant-observation.

7.14. Applications must make clear how the selection and formulation of research questions and the design of the research project ensure that the outcomes are not pre-determined. For example, this may include a consideration of whether the methodologies are appropriate.

7.15. Applications must make clear the planned methods of dissemination (e.g. research report, intended publication in journal or book).

7.16. Applications must declare the origin of any external funding; identify any areas of possible conflict of interest; and whether any restrictions have been placed on the research by another body. The University and its researchers will ensure that the terms and conditions of any grant or contract related to the research are adhered to.

7.17. If research is to be conducted overseas, the proposal must make explicit how the proposal aligns to the requirements of the laws of the country/countries in which it is proposed that the investigation take place. This may include a consideration of issues relating to compliance with local laws on Data Protection and Intellectual Property.

7.18. The application must make clear how the researcher plans to adhere to the duties as outlined in the Data Protection Act. This should also include

initial clarification about the processing of the data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

7.19. The application must make clear what provisions have been considered for the secure retention of sensitive or personal data. Researchers should inform research participants of their anticipated sharing or further use of personally identifiable research data and of the possibility of unanticipated future uses. These must include provisions that are in place for the secure destruction of this data, and when it is anticipated that this should take place.

7.20. The application must make clear that where results are collected individually (but the outcomes are anonymised), data protection procedures will be in place to ensure the protection of personal details and how will these be destroyed.

7.21. The application must make clear that researchers are aware of the wide variety of reproduction methods which are restricted in respect of protected data; and the possible implications of any copyright infringements. Any relevant permission in respect of this being obtained (e.g. the use of hitherto unpublished material) must be specified.

7.22. In instances of online material being used, proposals must make clear if there are any international laws which impact on this.

7.23. The application must make clear if there are any health and safety issues either for participants/subjects/animals and/or researchers and how advice has been taken on how these might be addressed.

7.24. Criteria for approval. The Independent Reviewers and DNCG's Research Ethics Committee consider applications on two basic issues:

7.24.1. If the Independent Reviewer and/or DNCG Research Ethics Committee determines that the project itself is unethical, consideration will be terminated at this point and the researcher will be notified in

writing. If the project could be rectified, the Independent Reviewer and/or the Committee can grant a conditioned approval and the researcher will be notified in writing with an explicit outline of the conditions of approval. If these are not clear to the researcher, it is the researcher's obligation to seek clarification.

7.24.2. Although it is generally not the task of the ethics review to assess the feasibility of the proposed design's potential outcomes, this Policy is based upon the underlying assumption that a less than rigorous application of method comes with the danger of wasting the participants' time and that it is therefore ethically unsound.

7.25. Applications need to be agreed on both of these issues before they are approved.

8. Ethical Issues Related to the Conduct of a Research Project

8.1 While it is important that ethical considerations are taken into account at the inception of a research project, it is also important that ethical considerations inform it throughout, up to and including the publication/dissemination of the research project.

8.2 During the research, a researcher may obtain information about, or evidence of physical, medical or psychological problems of which the participant is unaware. In such a case, the researcher has a duty to inform the participant if the investigator believes that by not so doing, the participant's future well-being may well be endangered.

8.3. If during the research project, a participant solicits advice or help from the researcher, caution should be exercised. If the issue is serious and the researcher is not qualified to offer help, then the appropriate source of professional advice should be recommended.

8.4. It is the researcher's responsibility to abide by the terms of ethical approval given. If the need for further ethical approval becomes apparent as the project develops, it is the responsibility of the researcher to apply for further approval.

8.5. A programme supervisor or the Independent Reviewer may monitor the progress of the research project to ensure compliance with the terms of approval.

8.6. Failure to comply with the terms of ethical approval for a research project, or failure to seek further approval if required, may lead to action under academic misconduct (unfair means) for students and disciplinary procedures for staff. This may also lead to cancellation of partnerships with consultant researchers.

8.7. Researchers must take measures to honour all commitments that have made to research participants.

8.8. In conducting research with children, great caution should be exercised when discussing the results with parents, carers, teachers or others in loco Parentis, since evaluative statements may carry unintended weight.

8.9. DNCG and its researchers will comply with all legal, ethical, funding body and organisational requirements for the collection, use and storage of data, especially personal data, where particular attention should be paid to the requirements of data protection legislation.

8.10. Researchers should consider how data will be gathered, analysed and managed, and how and in what form relevant data will eventually be made available to others. Data must be kept intact for any legally specified period and otherwise for five years at least, subject to any legal, ethical or other requirements, from the end of the project.

9. Ethical Issues Relating to Dissemination of Results

9.1 Researchers must ensure that dissemination and/or publication follows good ethical practice. The following should be noted as requirements of good ethical practice. They are not exhaustive.

9.2. All research should be appropriately disseminated and/or published on its conclusion.

9.3 Researchers have a responsibility to take account of all relevant evidence and present it without omission, misrepresentation or deception. Data and information must not knowingly be fabricated or manipulated in a way which might lead to distortion.

9.4 Work of other scholars or colleagues must be acknowledged. Professional standards need to be observed in: attribution of authorship; acknowledgement of sources; correctness of references.

10. Ethical Approval and Authorisation

10.1 Any research undertaken by students must receive ethical approval from the Chair of the Ethics Committee before commencement of the project/study.

10.2 It is expected that most undergraduate coursework will not require ethical approval. However, there may be exceptions for this, for example oral history assignments in which participants are interviewed. For other programmes of study, for example health and health-related courses, teacher education, sports studies and public relations interactions with human participants are integral to the programme. In such cases, the ethical issues and professional standards involved are expected to be addressed in the programme documentation. The extent to which this is the case may be subject to monitoring by DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

10.3 It is expected that all final year undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations/projects are submitted for authorisation or approval.

10.4 Students submitting proposals for authorisation or approval must understand that the proposal may not be substantially amended after approval. For example, if authorisation is not given, a student may not subsequently approach human participants; if approval is given for the involvement of human participants, a student may not widen the participant group, or significantly change the text of a questionnaire. An advisory note to this effect will be part of the ethical authorisation/approval process. Students will be warned that significant changes to the dissertation/project may invalidate the dissertation/project and result in it not being marked (see section 14.3).

10.5. It is a positive development that ethical considerations are increasingly built into undergraduate programmes of study; and it is good practice that students should formally consider ethical issues in respect of their research proposals. However, limitations on the nature of final year projects and dissertations are also appropriate.

10.6. The scale of any undergraduate project involving human or animal participants is such that it is unlikely to have any great impact. Any ethical consideration should include the potential impact upon the participants of the host institution where participants are supposed to be recruited.

10.7. In discussing the shape of the final year project or dissertation with the student, supervisors should bear in mind the following considerations:

10.7.1. Projects/dissertations should be formulated so as to qualify for local level authorisation or approval.

10.7.2. Where interaction with external bodies is proposed (e.g. schools or hospitals) consideration should be given to the potential burden, inconvenience or added responsibility on that outside body which the project would entail; and whether the research outcomes for the community as a whole justify requests being made to these bodies.

10.7.3. The supervisor will be able to supervise adequately any ethical issues during the course of the project/dissertation.

10.8. Supervisors will be assisted in this process if discussion is held at local level to identify those dissertations/projects which require ethical approval, but which fall within an accepted range of topics for which adequate ethical supervision can be assured.

10.9. Independent Reviewers will be nominated for each programme area by the respective Curriculum Directors. The role of the Independent Reviewer is to determine if a research proposal:

10.9.1. Can be considered at local level for ethical authorisation

10.9.2. Must be referred for Institutional approval via DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

10.10. Where the proposal cannot be approved at local level, the student may be required to submit an alternative application.

10.11. For the purpose of monitoring, and also as a check against any departure from the permitted project, ethical authorisation/approved forms should be retained for five calendar years from the date of issue.

11. Local Authorisation

11.1. This is undertaken within the Programme by Independent Reviewers. This process confirms that the proposed research project does not need further consideration at institutional level.

11.2. Local authorisation by the Independent Reviewer confirms that the undergraduate/postgraduate research to be undertaken does not need further ethical scrutiny by DNCG's Research Ethics Committee. It also serves to remind students that they may not depart from the authorised project and may not involve human participants, subjects or animals unless specific ethical approval is obtained.

11.3. Local authorisation should only be given to ‘low-risk’ projects where the ethical issues are not complex or sensitive; and where there is minimal risk of harm either to any human or animal participants or to the researcher and adequate supervision of the project is demonstrable.

11.4. Because of the nature of research projects, it is impossible to specify in detail or in absolute terms those projects which can be approved at local level. However, the themes underpinning local level authorisation are:

11.4.1. the experience of the researcher;

11.4.2. sufficient assessment of the level of risk;

11.4.3. the complexity and sensitivity of proposals;

11.4.4. appropriate safeguards, such as experienced supervision being in place

11.5. The principles of local level authorisation are as follows:

11.5.1. Approvable: low-risk projects, which include the following:

- projects in which the ethical issues are not complex or sensitive;
- projects where there is minimal risk of harm either to participants or researcher;
- where adequate supervision of the project is demonstrable (i.e. for undergraduate and postgraduate applications).

11.5.2. Not approvable:

- projects which do not comply with the provisions above;
- requests for research into animal subjects;
- all requests of approval for projects involving children under the age of 18 or vulnerable persons (i.e. an individual who may be incapable of understanding what it means to participate in research and/or may not understand what constitutes informed consent) where the researcher is not currently known or working with the proposed participants.
- all requests for occluded or covert research projects (i.e. where information and/or intentions of the study are partially or fully withheld from participants for the purposes of the research project).

11.6. In making these decisions, any exercised judgement rests with the Independent Reviewers empowered to give consent for authorisation.

11.7. The Independent Reviewers will be members of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee through which they will gain experience of the research projects expected to be considered at local and institutional level.

11.8. Independent Reviewers will receive training in the identification of ethical issues, and particularly assessment of the degree of risk involved. They should also be aware of the sensitivity of social issues like divorce or sexual orientation; and criminal/deviant issues like domestic violence or drug abuse. Such projects would not normally be permitted for undergraduate research, and, depending on the level of experience of the staff member as researcher and/or postgraduate supervisor, might be referred to DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

11.9. In cases of doubt, the Independent Reviewers should seek advice from the Chair of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

11.10. The decision of whether a proposed research project is authorised or referred for institutional level approval must be communicated to the researcher by their supervisor or the Independent Reviewer.

11.11. The status of authorisation to the student must be communicated in writing (via email). A copy of the original application must be retained and stored in the correct folder of the DN Colleges Ethics Microsoft Team (i.e. Approved by Independent Reviewer).

12. Institutional Level Approval

12.1. Approval should be sought from DNCG's Research Ethics Committee where:

- there are ‘medium’ to ‘high’ risk or substantial or complex ethical issues involved;
- the consent of external bodies, for example the NHS are required;
- this is a requirement for funding by an external body

12.2. This is undertaken by DNCG’s Research Ethics Committee and occurs when local level authorisation has been rejected or referred.

12.3. All applications forwarded to DNCG’s Research Ethics Committee should be submitted on Research Ethics Approval Forms and include a copy of the recommendations made at the local level and the consent of the Independent Reviewer to give consent for authorisation at this level. In the case of a voluntary self-referral (staff-research), the researcher is advised to provide a brief justification for the sought approval by DNCG’s Research Ethics Committee.

12.4. Where the research comes under the jurisdiction of a Local Medical Research Ethics Committee (e.g. NHS), or other equivalent committee, a copy of the appropriate documentation from that body must be included with the application. Approval will then proceed on the basis of the NHS consent for the project without the need for duplicated assessment of the application. This does not preclude the committee additionally requiring compliance with any institutional requirement.

12.5. DNCG’s Research Ethics Committee will consider applications and, if necessary, refer them back to the applicant for further details or remit the final decision to Chair’s action. Only in highly exceptional circumstances will a DNCG Research Ethics Committee do anything other than approve or not approve an application (i.e. it is not normally appropriate for DNCG’s Research Ethics Committee to require ongoing involvement in the research project once it is approved).

12.6. In making decisions, DNCG's Research Ethics Committee will bear in mind the need of the applicant for a timely response to the application. Here, the applicant will receive a completed E5 form detailing the outcome of their application from the ethics@dncolleges.ac.uk email address within 48 hours of the panel.

12.7. The decisions of DNCG's Research Ethics Committee on matters referred to it are final and there is no appeal mechanism. However, researchers may re-submit proposals following amendments.

13. Monitoring and Review

13.1. To assure itself that consistency and compliance with ethical approval processes are occurring, members of staff with specific administrative authority, such as the Vice Principal for Higher Education or members of staff with specific quality functions, will periodically monitor or review the compliance of research projects approved at programme or institutional level with the terms of approval.

13.2 Outcomes will be reported to the Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Committee and Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB).

14. Ethical Misconduct

14.1. DNCG commits itself to protect from any subsequent victimisation or reprisal if any member of staff or student who has hones and reasonable suspicion that serious breaches of research ethics approval have taken place, even if the suspicion is subsequently found to be mistaken or unfounded.

14.2 Deliberate breaches of the Policy and/or ethical standards are viewed seriously and may be referred for consideration under the relevant disciplinary policies.

14.3 Research or ethical misconduct can be a product of deliberate, reckless or negligent action. The following are examples of research or ethical related misconduct:

- Failure to obtain permission to conduct research
- Falsification of information or deception in research proposals
- Unauthorised use of confidential information
- Unethical behaviour in the conduct of any research
- Fabrication, falsification or corruption of research information or data
- Deviation from good research practice where this results in harm to humans, animals or the environment
- Dishonest misinterpretation of results and/or publication of data known to be misleading
- Plagiarism or dishonest use of sources
- Misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
- Fraud, misuse of research funds or equipment
- Attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- Eliciting others to be involved in research misconduct

14.4 DNCG will make it clear to researchers that any misconduct in research is unacceptable and will be reported; that researchers who are found to have committed misconduct in research will be subject to disciplinary proceedings and that where researchers are members of a regulated profession, cases of serious misconduct in research will be referred to the body regulating their profession. DNCG will also ensure that researchers who are found not to have committed misconduct will be supported, and appropriate steps taken, to restore their reputation and that of any relevant research project(s).

15. Guide for Use of Animal Unit

15.1. The animal unit and facilities are available for students and staff to use for research study. Many types of study are possible. However, animal welfare is our highest priority. Therefore, we do not allow invasive procedures (i.e. taking blood) or those that cause the animal pain or unnecessary distress. Health and safety is also a high priority for both staff and students

as well as the animals. The centre staff are also available to help and advise but to fit everyone's requirements into a busy timetable, the following guidelines have been drawn up:

15.1.1. Firstly, meet with the programme leader and animal unit manager with a written outline plan and to discuss specifics. The outcome of this meeting should be signed approval that the programme leader and animal unit manager approve your project in principle. You should have this in place before submitting your ethics application.

15.1.2. Please be aware that your research WILL also require authorisation from DNCG's Research Ethics Committee.

15.1.3. Any general queries need to be directed to the module leader or programme leader.

15.1.4. If you are unsure if the animal unit has the equipment you require please initially ask a member of the technician team at your meeting or email to find out if we have it or in some circumstances it may be able to be purchased for you dependant on cost.

16. Research Guidelines and Publications

The following references are intended as useful resources to help inform the development and completion of research related assessments and projects that are ethically sound. The sources lists are not exhaustive.

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Ethical Principles http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/ethics.php
- British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences
- https://www.bases.org.uk/imgs/bases_code_of_conduct872.pdf
- British Educational Research Association, Research Intelligence http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/ri/
- British Educational Research Association, Research Reviews http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/reviews/
- British Educational Research Association, Revised Ethical Guidelines (2024) https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024

- British Educational Research Association, Good Practice in Educational Research Writing
  http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/goodpr1.pdf
- Centre of Parliamentary Studies
  Animal Welfare Act 2006 Overview
  http://www.parlicentre.org/
- Concordat on Use of Animals in Research
  http://concordatopenness.org.uk/
- Guildelines for the treatment of animals in behavioural research and training
- National Patient Safety Agency: National Research Ethics Service
  http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/HE
- Natural England
  SSSI Enforcement Policy Statement
  https://www.gov.uk/guidance/enforcement-laws-advice-on-protecting-the-natural-environment-in-england
- Respect: Professional and Ethical Codes for Socio-Economic Research in the Information Society.
  http://www.respectproject.org/main/index.php
- The Respect Code of Practice
  http://www.respectproject.org/code/index.phpHE