



RESEARCH ETHICS WITHIN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Professional development

Tuesday 14th December 2021.



Agenda

- Introduction

- UREC. UoM Research Ethics Committee – overseeing committee
 - Research Code of Practice
 - Research Ethics Review Procedures

- FREC. Faculty Research Ethics Committee - Faculty of Education
 - Ethics Application Form
 - Documentation (Information Letters, Consent Forms, etc.)

- Questions



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Research Ethics: “integrity and professionalism”

Introduction

- Change of chairperson starting September 2021.
- Change of half the Faculty's Ethics Committee members.
- Covid was a challenge for dissertation work in schools and outside.
- A new Institute added on to FREC.
- Meetings: 15/9; 22/9; 29/9; 22/10; 29/11; 1/12.
- Auditing.

UREC. Research Code of Practice

Principles

Application

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/ResearchCodeofPractice.pdf>

Research Code of Practice

Principles

- Legal, regulatory, ethical
- Integrity, dignity
- Do no harm (ends & means)
- Privacy, personal data protection (vulnerability)
- Informed consent
- Proportionality
- Social concerns
- Wholeness of individual
- Benefits for society

also, biodiversity; terrorism; respecting animals inc. 3 R's – reduce, replace, refine.

Good practice: Consent

Obtaining it

- personal data has consent of each participant
- informed consent about research and any risks
- prior to processing any personal data
- data specifically related to research undertaken
- if already in recruitment/information sheet, refer to it in consent form.
- no informed consent (e.g., children), parents /guardians to consent, children can assent.
- a copy of all documents given to participants.

Consent form

- involves research;
- the purpose;
- duration of involvement;
- description of procedures to be followed;
- psychological/physical risks/discomfort
- any benefits to participant or others;
- voluntary - refusal and discontinuance;
- use of data (inc. discontinued);
- records confidentiality (identifiability), access, storage duration;
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Malta Data Protection Act 2018 to access, rectify, and erase the data;
- name and contact details of researcher and supervisor

Privacy and Identifiability

- Personal data - data attributed to an identifiable person

- Special Categories of Personal Data – reveals/identifies
 - race or ethnic origin,
 - political opinions,
 - religious or philosophical beliefs,
 - membership of trade union,
 - health,
 - sex life,
 - sexual orientation,
 - genetic data or biometric data.

Privacy and vulnerability

Privacy

- Processed fairly and lawfully;
- Adequate;
- Relevant and not excessive;
- Correct and up-to-date;
- Not retained longer than necessary;
- Anonymity and confidentiality.

Vulnerability (coercion/undue influence)

- include a statement that the integrity and dignity of research participants shall be respected
- informed consent obtained
- detailed safeguards (rights and welfare)
- to include:
 - children,
 - prisoners,
 - persons with disability,
 - substance abusers,
 - economically or educationally disadvantaged persons.

UREC. Research Ethics Review Procedures

Review process.

- As of January 2018, all research-related UM dissertations must contain the following statement: “I declare that I have abided by the UM's Research Ethics Review Procedures.”
 -
- **Research** ... systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.
- The **Researcher** is the Principal Investigator responsible for the preparation, conduct, and administration of a research project. In the case of student projects, the Researcher is the student, duly guided by an academic supervisor.

FREC

Faculty of Education



Institutes and Centres

- Institute for Physical Education & Sport
- Centre for Environmental Education and Research
- Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research
- Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation
- Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health
- Edward Debono Institute for the Design and Development of Thinking

Research Ethics and Data Protection Form (REDP Form)

The new form

Part 1: Applicant details

Part 2: Self-Assessment and Details

Part 3: Submission – Review or Records

The Form: <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/redp-form/frontEnd/>

Replica (of REDP Form): <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/forms/>

Instructional videos – changes/content/submission:
<https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/forms/instructionalvideos/>

Samples (letters and forms): <https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/resources/samples/>

The procedure

1. Part 2 'Self-Assessment' section on REDP form.

2. either, (a) no potential issues in Form and supporting documents, sent "for FREC records" (and audit), research commences,
or, (b) await REDP Review by FREC [see following slide].

3. if, (i) proposal involves special categories of personal data,
(ii) ethics or data protection issues cannot be resolved with the Researcher;
... proposal passed on to UREC.

FREC review (when required).

i) Conditional Approval:

- If only minor issues are indicated, approval is granted on condition that the amendments are carried out by the Researcher, endorsed by the supervisor and verified by the FREC.

ii) Approval Withheld:

- If major concerns are indicated, the Researcher must submit a point-by-point response to the issues raised ... together with any amended documents as required, for further review

iii) Approved

Notes

- 3 different permissions for 3 different sectors:
 - MEDE Research Ethics Committee for State schools,
 - Secretariat for Catholic Education for Church schools,
 - Heads of School for Independent schools.

- Research with UoM students requires Registrar's clearance, with UoM staff that of Human Resources; with Junior College students that of the College Principal.

- Consent form for 18+, Assent form for younger participants.

The supervisor ... for balance of responsibilities.

“In the case of students,

- i. the completion of the self-assessment and the full form (where required) shall be **guided** by the academic supervisor of the research who shall also
- ii. be required to **endorse** the form eventually submitted to FREC.

Supervisors should be aware that when endorsing the research proposals of their supervisees they are accepting responsibility for ensuring that the research proposal as presented is in conformity with Senate policies and procedures on research ethics.”

Research Ethics Review Procedures, p.7.

“Who is ultimately responsible for the research that is conducted?

For student applications, the primary supervisor is responsible for ensuring that research ethics and data protection procedures have been followed.

Research Ethics FAQs

Support

- What questions does the URECA form contain.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/forms/instructionalvideos/whatquestionsdoestheurecaformcontain/> (18:24)

- How do you submit the URECA form online.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/forms/instructionalvideos/howdoyousubmittheurecaonlineform/> (8:32)

- Good Practice in Inclusive Language – University of Malta.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/goodpracticeinclusivelanguage.pdf> (21 pages)

Support/ cont.

- Data Management Plans for Research at the University of Malta

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/URECDataManagementPlan.pdf>

- FAQs

<https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/faqs/>

- FREC list of useful sites/resources

<https://www.um.edu.mt/educ/aboutus/boardsandcommittees/frec>