Are you a member of the university, staff or student, doing research with human subjects, whatever age, gender, educational background or belief?

Are your participants members of vulnerable groups, such as hospital patients, children (under the age of 18), prisoners, mentally disabled persons or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons?

Are you aware of your ethical responsibilities towards the participants of your research?

Do you know that the University has a Research Ethics Committee, that has the delegated authority from the Data Commissioner, which provides guidelines to regulate all research on human subjects, and that you need its clearance before you can to embark on your research?

Are you familiar with the provisions of the Data Protection Act that might be relevant to your research project? Are you sure that you are in compliance with these provisions?
The University acknowledges and accepts its responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects, and acknowledges that it bears full responsibility for the performance of all research involving human subjects and for complying with laws and regulations that relate to such research.

The University ensures that before human subjects are involved in research, proper consideration will be given to:

• the risks to the subjects;
• the anticipated benefits to the subjects and others;
• the importance of knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result;
• the informed consent process to be employed;
• the data protection provisions; and
• the additional safeguards for vulnerable subjects. (from the guidelines)

The Data Commissioner accepts the advice of the University Research Ethics Committee, and has delegated to the Committee his powers to approve research projects. This means that UREC’s approval is equivalent to permission by the Data Commissioner for the research to be carried out.

If you embark on research on human subjects without permission from the University Research Ethics Committee that has been delegated authority from the Data Protection Commissioner, you may be breaking the law.

How to obtain approval:

• Go to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) university website, read the guidelines and download the proposal form.
• Fill the form and obtain the necessary signatures and permissions.
• Remember to include a copy of the consent form if necessary.
• Present it the completed form to your faculty ethics committee, which will discuss your proposal, and pass it on to UREC with its advice (Information on the different Faculty Ethics Committees is available on our website).
• At its meetings, UREC is bound to discuss all those research proposals that reach it at least two weeks in advance. (Dates of UREC meetings are published on the UREC website).

Make sure that you allocate enough time for this process to take place, It is important to stress that you are not allowed to start your research project before you get UREC approval.

Please visit the UREC website http://home.um.edu.mt/urec/ for the following information: the guidelines, the proposal form, lists of the Faculty Ethics Committee members and the dates of UREC meetings for the current academic year. Our website also includes useful information on data protection and informed consent.