Faculty of Information & Communication Technology

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

FACULTY RESEARH ETHICS COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) guidelines

- The UREC guidelines can be found at http://www.um.edu.mt/urec/gpropform.
- These guidelines apply university-wide while the ICT FREC guidelines (below) target scenarios that are specific to ICT research projects.
- Simply put, the purpose of obtaining ethical clearance is to provide protection to researchers in case they are faced with a lawsuit on the basis of their research work. It is the researchers' responsibility to comply with the documented research method. Any deviations void this protection and no assistance will be provided.
- Ethical clearance can only be given for (parts of) research that is yet to be carried out.

ICT Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) guidelines

- The ICT FREC guidelines are intended to complement the UREC guidelines (link above), and therefore all researchers are required to be primarily familiar with them.
- These guidelines are intended to assist researchers and research supervisors discern whether ethical clearance is required or not.
- When there is doubt, supervisors are urged to seek advice from members of the ICT FREC prior to start compiling an ethical clearance proposal form.
- In general, whenever researchers wish to maintain the anonymity of participants, it is suggested that they do not collect data themselves (if at all possible).
- Consent forms do not require the inclusion of participants ID card numbers. Rather, only that of the researchers is required.
- Web questionnaires do not require a consent form.

Clearance is required whenever research involves:

1) Personal data being collected, even if it belongs to third parties, as well as in cases where it is already anonymous. Example: Names, ID card numbers….etc. Specifically it is recommended that any

research that collects participant names just for the sake of participant labeling, a participant counter is used instead.

2) Subjects which are considered vulnerable, such as children, persons with a disability…etc

3) A process that could incur some form of stress to or undermine the safety of subjects. Stress includes: distressful memories, risk of health or injury.

Clearance is not required when:

1) Research is restricted to gathering feedback about an ICT artifact.

2) Research makes use of a publicly available dataset.

3) Research makes use of an available dataset that had previously gained UREC approval. In this case it is only required that the name of the additional user of this dataset to be registered directly with UREC.

Supervisor's role

It is the supervisors' responsibility to:

1) Consult the UREC and FREC ethical guidelines at the project proposal and evaluation plan stages in order to access whether ethical clearance is required.

2) Guide researchers to complete the UREC proposal form and compile the full set of required documentation.

3) When in doubt, informally consult with a member of FREC before instructing researchers to initiate a UREC proposal application process.