

# RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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## Table of Contents

1	Research Ethics Policy .....	2
2	Research Ethics Principles.....	2
3	Ethical Principles Defined .....	3
3.1	Requirement for Ethical Approval .....	4
3.2	Ethical issues related to the Conduct of a Research Project .....	4
3.3	Ethical issues relating to Dissemination of Results .....	5
4	Overview of the process and different levels of ethical approval .....	5
4.1	The Process .....	6
4.2	Failure to seek Ethical Approval.....	7
5	Applying for Ethical Approval .....	7
6	Appeals .....	7
7	Non-Compliance / Provisions for Raising Concerns.....	8
7.1	Non-Compliance .....	8
7.2	Raising Concerns .....	8
7.3	Good Faith .....	8
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>		<b>9</b>
<b>RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM .....</b>		<b>10</b>

## 1 Research Ethics Policy

Rushmore Business School (RBS) recognises the importance of maintaining public confidence in the ethical quality of approved research conducted by students of the Business School. RBS requires that all research carried out at all levels within the Business School is conducted according to high ethical standards. RBS requires that all research undertaken by students complies with the legal requirements of the Mauritius, and/or the country of location of the research project.

All research requires either ethical approval or an assessment to be undertaken to confirm that ethical approval is not required. Researchers and supervisors overseeing the research projects of students have a responsibility to consider whether their student's research needs ethical approval or whether their student's research will involve matters excluded from the approval process.

RBS has research ethics approval procedures in operation at Supervisor, Department and School level; and all research projects with human participants conducted by students of the Business School require approval at the relevant level. All *research projects* must be submitted for review and be approved prior to data collection.

## 2 Research Ethics Principles

The main principles are:

- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, value and quality.
- The results of research should benefit society either directly or by generally improving human knowledge and understanding.
- Researchers must ensure their proposed research projects follow the ethical guidelines of an appropriate learned society recognised by their Department. Departments will be responsible for identifying appropriate learned societies with ethical guidelines and RBS Research Ethics Committee will review and approve societies on Departments lists.
- Research projects with human participants should aim to avoid or minimise social harm to groups and individuals. Risk assessment appropriate to each research project will be undertaken.
- Participants should be fully informed about the purpose, methods, and intended possible use of the research. Where there are exceptions to this, the purpose and rationale of such research projects will be fully considered, as appropriate, before approval is given.
- Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from coercion.

- The interests of research participants should be considered at all stages of the research projects. In particular, the following should be observed, where appropriate to the project and in line with learned society practice:
  - Participants should be no worse off as a result of their participation in the project;
  - Provisions for withdrawal from the project should be in place;
  - The interests of children, vulnerable adults and other vulnerable groups should be given specific consideration;
  - Participants should not be subjected to undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment or other harm.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by participants must be respected, except where the requirements of professional and learned society practice determine. Any limits to confidentiality must be explained to participants.
- Issues of anonymity and anonymisation of results should be fully considered, and where personal disclosure or identification is likely, this must be discussed with the participants and their specific consent to this obtained.
- Researchers should ensure that the research methodology is appropriate. Research designs should be such as to maximise a project's utility and relevance for the benefit of society.
- Research outcomes should be disseminated in a manner which makes them accessible.
- 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.
- The research culture will be characterised by respect for all groups in society, in line with the School's Equality Policy and national legislation on Equal opportunities.
- The health and safety of both researcher and participants/subjects will be carefully considered in the design and execution of research projects.

### 3 Ethical Principles Defined

Research is a form of disciplined enquiry which aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory. This does not normally extend to general coursework assignments, but does apply to final year undergraduate dissertations or projects.

Research ethics are the moral principles guiding the planning and conduct of research, the publication of outcomes, and post-project care and/or disposal of records or materials.

Research with human participants should be taken in its broadest possible sense and includes questionnaires, observations and the use of materials derived from human participants as well as invasive or intrusive procedures. If the study meets the definition of research and does not involve human participants, but raises any ethical issues with potential social or environmental implications, ethical approval may be needed.

The re-use of already collected data may require ethical approval due to its sensitive nature or if individuals can be identified from it.

### 3.1 Requirement for Ethical Approval

Any research project undertaken by students of the Business School which involves human participants must receive ethical approval before it takes place. This may be given at Supervisor, Department or School level, depending on the nature of the research proposal. It is the responsibility of the researcher to seek guidance on research ethics from their supervisor.

It will be expected that simple, low-risk research projects that comply with appropriate learned society ethical guidelines will be approved by supervisors (for undergraduate and master's level research projects) and Research Ethics Committee (for MPhil/PhD and other research projects).

### 3.2 Ethical issues related to the Conduct of a Research Project

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.

All research must comply with the Data Protection Act. All funded, contractual or collaborative research must comply with the specified requirements for data storage.

All researchers/ Research Supervisors must take full responsibility for ensuring appropriate storage and security for all study information, including research data and consent forms. They must keep appropriately secure data records for the life of research projects. For taught course students the life of a project includes completion of all forms of assessment, including re-submission. Any researcher that wishes to retain data beyond the life of a research project (e.g. for future research use) must gain ethical approval, with the appropriate consents, to do this and must store the data in a form that complies with the Data Protection Act.

It is the researcher's responsibility to abide by the terms of the 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 that further approval.

The Department may monitor the progress of the research project to ensure compliance with the terms of approval.

### 3.3 Ethical issues relating to Dissemination of Results

Researchers also need to ensure that dissemination and/or publication follows good ethical practice. Researchers should seek advice locally and follow appropriate learned society guidelines.

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.

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. Fair attribution of authorship in a collaborative research project should be observed, with seniority of position not creating an automatic right to co-authorship. Honorary authorship is unacceptable. The order of authors should recognise their respective contributions to the work.

## 4 Overview of the process and different levels of ethical approval

There are different levels of approval for students whose research projects require ethics approval by the:

- Research Supervisor (Supervisor approval)
- Department level approval
- Research Ethics Committee (REC) (School level approval)

The level of approval required is dictated by the level of risk associated with the proposed research project. All students undertaking research within or on behalf of the Business School are therefore required to complete the Risk Checklist to establish the risk level of the project. Once the level of risk is determined, researchers may also be required to provide more information.

The Research Ethics Policy and Procedures must be read before submission of an application and you will need to confirm you have done this and that you agree to adhere to the RBS's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures when you are submitting an application.

#### 4.1 The Process

The researcher is responsible for the following:

*Prior to commencing the research project:*

- Ensuring they discuss the project with their Research Supervisor prior to seeking ethical approval;
- Completing the application for approval;
- Ensuring compliance with any other and/or additional requirements (such as those defined by the law of the country within which the research is taking place, research collaborator(s) or any other relevant organisation or body);
- Obtaining ethical approval before any data collection commences for the project.

*Throughout the research/research project:*

- Operating in an ethical manner with due regard to the ethical considerations and challenges relevant to the research project;
- Operating within the provisions of the ethical approval granted;
- Ensuring that where the scope of the research project changes, that such changes are discussed with their Supervisor to ensure the ethical approval they have been granted remains appropriate.

*Following completion of the research:*

- Ensuring data is stored securely and retained/destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the School's Records Retention Schedule;
- Ensuring dissemination of the findings is appropriate in terms of anonymity and confidentiality.

#### ***Research Supervisors***

All student research projects should be discussed with the Research Supervisor prior to submission for ethical approval. A formal application is then made to the Supervisor with the submission of the project's details for ethical approval. All Research Supervisors have the appropriate experience and expertise to effectively supervise students to successful completion according to the level of their programme of study or course and will be familiar with the policy and procedures for gaining ethical approval for projects.

#### ***Research module leaders***

Research module leaders will advise students on the ethical approval processes and deadlines for obtaining approval, will monitor the ethical decisions made for a cohort, and will advise on the penalties for carrying out research without ethical approval in the research module handbooks.

### ***Research Ethics Committee***

The Research Ethics Committee includes academic staff who have experience and expertise in reviewing submissions for ethical approval.

#### 4.2 Failure to seek Ethical Approval

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 the provisions relating to the Code of Good Practice and Regulations relating to Misconduct in Academic Research.

Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage, whether intentional or unintentional, is a matter of academic judgement and may be considered to be unfair practice. Examples of unfair practice include, but are not limited to, non-compliance with RBS's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures, failure to gain ethical approval for relevant submitted work, cheating, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, ghost-writing and falsification of data. Definitions of these offences and the serious consequences of unfair practice can be found in our Rules and Regulations.

## 5 Applying for Ethical Approval

The researcher who is conducting the project must fill in and submit the form at Appendix A.

This document includes an overview of the process of ethical submission, review and approval.

The Research Ethics Policy and Procedures must be read before completion and submission for ethical approval and you will be required to tick a box in the application to confirm you have done this and that you agree to abide by RBS's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures.

## 6 Appeals

If at any stage the application for ethical approval is likely to be rejected, this will normally be referred back to the applicant with the deficiencies of the application identified, and giving the applicant the opportunity of a further submission.



The decisions of the Research Ethics Committee on matters referred to it are final and there is no appeal mechanism. The applicant and person(s) responsible for considering the application have the right to attend the meeting and speak to the issue.

## 7 Non-Compliance / Provisions for Raising Concerns

### 7.1 Non-Compliance

RBS expects that all research carried out in its name complies with the requirements and expectations of this policy and associated procedures. Where a research study or researcher is suspected to be in breach of this Policy and / or associated procedures, Rushmore Business School may take action at a local level to resolve this. Where the circumstances invoke other policies of the Business School these may also be applied. This may include RBS rules and regulations, policies and other procedures.

### 7.2 Raising Concerns

In the interests of openness, good practice and the reputation of the Business School, members of staff and students of the Business School, and members of the public, are entitled to raise concerns about the correct ethical practices in research, and particularly in relation to compliance with research ethics.

### 7.3 Good Faith

It is expected that all concerns will be raised in good faith. Where this is the case, the person raising the concern(s) will be protected from reprisal or victimisation even if the concern is shown to be unfounded.

Where a complaint or concern raised is vexatious or malicious, the member of staff or student complaining may face disciplinary proceedings.

# APPENDIX A

## RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

*(This form will be retained for the purposes of quality assurance of compliance and audit for THREE years)*

All research must receive ethical approval before any data collection commences.

<b>1. APPLICANT DETAILS</b>	
Your name (if a group project, include all names)	
Department	
Awarding Body	
<b>2. STATUS</b>	
Undergraduate student	
Postgraduate student	
Other (give details)	
<b>3. STUDENT DETAILS</b>	
Student ID	
Course Title	
Student Email	
Supervisor's name	
<b>4. PROJECT/STUDY DETAILS</b>	
Project/Study Title	
Start Date of Project	
Expected Completion Date of Project	
<b>4.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW</b>	
<p><i>Please give a brief overview of your study, including a summary of your aims and objectives.</i></p> <p><b>Help:</b> Describe the purpose of the research and what question(s) the project should answer.</p>	
<b>4.2 METHODOLOGY</b>	
<p><i>Please give a description of your methodology, including any data collection and analysis methods.</i></p> <p><b>Help:</b> Give an outline of your study here. You may submit your research proposal (no more than 2 A-4 sides).</p>	

**5. CONFIRMATION STATEMENTS**

Please tick this box to confirm that your research study has a potential benefit to society directly or by generally improving knowledge and understanding.

Please tick this box to confirm you have read the Research Ethics Policy and Procedures and will adhere to these in the conduct of this project.

**6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

*Please give a description of the main ethical considerations involved in the study.*

*(E.g. the type of participants, the sensitive nature of the study, the data collection process)*

**7. HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

*Please give a description of who will be included, this should include sample size/number of participants, individual or group focused, any at risk or vulnerable participants, participants aged under 18 years. Please also specify your rationale for including/excluding participants.*

**7.1 Recruitment, Voluntary Participation, Consent and Right to Withdraw**

*Please give a brief description of the recruitment process, how you will ensure voluntary participation, if (and how) informed consent will be obtained prior to participants taking part in the study, and the right of withdrawal from the research process.*

Help: Include clear information on how participants will be identified, approached and recruited; whether help from third party is required; what information will be given to participants; any expenses or incentives to be offered to participants; different stages a participants can withdraw or withdraw their data and how they can do this.

**8. Risks and Benefits**

*Please give a brief description of how, when and where the research will take place and whether there are any risks and/or benefits involved.*

Help: Include information on what participants will have to do, rationale and level of risk involved (health and safety issues, fieldworks)

**9. Personal Data, Anonymity and Confidentiality**

*Please specify what type of information/data will be collected/analysed and the source(s), if and how you will ensure the anonymity of participants and keep information confidential.*

Help: Include information on whether you are collecting new information or using public domain information; whether data you are using includes personal details; how data will be processed and stored; who will have access to it; how and when will it be destroyed; if any disclosure of information to third parties is involved due to professional practice; explain any limits to confidentiality and how participants will be advised about these and possible outcomes.

**10. Reporting and Dissemination**

*Please give details of the planned dissemination and specify if the findings from the research will be published and whether any permission is required for this.*

Help: Include information on methods of dissemination (e.g. dissertation/thesis) and/or what will be published and where. Specify if any permission is needed (e.g. from participants, clients) prior to publication and if there are any potential issues relating to intellectual Property Rights.

**11. Location of Research**

*Will the research take place outside of Mauritius?*

YES  NO  If yes, give details below.

<b>DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE/S</b>					
<i>I confirm that I will undertake this project as detailed above. I understand that I must abide by the terms of the approval and that I may not make any substantial amendments to the project without further approval. I understand that research with human participants or their data must not commence without ethical approval.</i>					
<i>Signed</i>			<i>Date</i>		
<b>APPROVAL FROM THE RESEARCH SUPERVISOR (Tick as appropriate)</b>					
<i>I have discussed the ethical issues arising from the project with the student. The project is viable and the student has appropriate skills to undertake the project. I understand that research with human participants must not commence without ethical approval. I recommend this project for approval.</i>					<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I recommend this project for consideration at Department level. It cannot be approved at supervisory level due to the following reason(s):</i>					<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Name</i>		<i>Signed</i>		<i>Date</i>	
<b>APPROVAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT (Tick as appropriate)</b>					
<i>I confirm ethical approval for this project.</i>					<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I recommend this project for consideration at School level. It cannot be approved at Department level due to the following reason(s):</i>					<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Head of Department</i>		<i>Signed</i>		<i>Date</i>	
<b>APPROVAL FROM THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE</b>					
<i>I confirm that this project was considered by the Research Ethics Committee and has received ethical approval.</i>					
<i>Chair</i>		<i>Signed</i>		<i>Date</i>	

**Supporting Documentation:**

<b>SUBMISSION CHECKLIST</b>	<b>Tick box</b>
RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant Information Sheet(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent Form(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruitment documents <i>e.g. posters, flyers, advertisements, email invitations, letters, web pages if online research</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Measures to be used <i>e.g. questionnaires, surveys, interview schedules, psychological tests</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters/communications to and from third parties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of any other approvals or permissions <i>e.g. Health Authority approval</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research proposal (no more than 2 A4 pages) <i>It is not a requirement that this is included, however, if this would help the understanding of a complex project by the reviewer(s), please include.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk assessment form <i>Some projects may require a risk assessment form</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmation of insurance and indemnity cover <i>Some projects need to be referred to the Insurance &amp; Risk Office</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: give details here:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Submitting your documents:**

- Email typed forms and supporting documentation to your Supervisor.

**Outcome:**

- Applicants will be advised of the outcome of the application by the Research Supervisor or the Research Ethics Committee.

YOU MAY ONLY BEGIN ANY DATA COLLECTION ONCE YOU RECEIVE NOTIFICATION THAT THE PROJECT HAS ETHICAL APPROVAL. If the circumstances of your research study change after approval, it is your responsibility to revisit the Risk Checklist and complete a further application.