

SREC ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

Introduction

UCC academic staff and postgraduate research students who are seeking ethical approval should complete this approval form. Ethical review by the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) is required where the methodology is not clinical or therapeutic in nature and proposes to involve:

- direct interaction with human participants for the purpose of data collection using research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups etc.;
- indirect observation with human participants for example using observation, web surveys etc.;
- access to, or utilisation of, anonymised datasets;
- access to, or utilisation of, data or case files/records concerning identifiable individuals;
- conducting Internet Research or research online.

SREC considers itself an enabling committee, promoting strong research ethics amongst UCC's community of staff and student researchers. We are open to all types of research in the social research domain. If your research approach does not readily fit into this application form, do not be discouraged: please add additional relevant notes to convey what you think is pertinent about the ethical aspects of your study.

Contact us: srec@ucc.ie

Further information about research ethics is available on the [UCC Research Ethics website](#).

Further information on training videos, and sample informed consent/information sheet/assent forms are on the [SREC website](#).

Notes

1. Digital inclusivity notice: text set to left-aligned, alternative text added to images, no italics, and plain English web links are used.
2. SREC is a committee of the University Ethics Committee. If you are unsure which University ethics committee you should apply to, please consult [this resource](#). Acknowledgement: An early version of this form was adapted from pp. 13-14 of the Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Ethical Approval in Psychological Research (British Psychological Society, 2004).
3. Please submit a **signed** copy of this form and all relevant attachments **as one PDF file** to srec@ucc.ie. No hard copies of this application are required.
4. SREC is not primarily concerned with methodological issues, but we may comment on such issues in so far as they have ethical implications.
5. Your SREC application form should be concise: please **do not** copy and paste a research proposal. Applications typically range between 10-20 pages (including appendices) with some longer applications at 25-30 pages. Overly long applications will be returned without a review.
6. Your SREC application form should be written so that researchers outside of your profession / discipline can understand how you plan to undertake your study.
7. If your study requires a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), you **do not** need to include a copy of the DPIA with your SREC application form.
8. To access training on research ethics, please visit the [SREC video training series here](#).

SECTION 1: APPLICATION CHECKLIST

This checklist includes all of the items that are required for an application to be deemed complete. In the event that any of these are not present, the application will be returned to the applicant **without** having been sent for review. Please ensure that your application includes all of these items prior to submission. Thank you and best of luck with your research!

Please complete prior to submission	Yes/No	N/A
a) All relevant files are combined into one PDF file (SREC application form, consent/assent forms, information sheets, data collection instruments, permission letters, etc.)	Yes	
b) Completed SREC Application Form	Yes	
c) Information Sheet(s) / Information Statement (i.e. at the beginning of an electronic survey) included	No	
d) Consent / Assent Form(s) / Consent Statement (i.e. at the beginning of an electronic survey) included	No	
e) Data Collection Instrument: Psychometric Instruments / Interview Guide / Focus Group Schedule / Survey Questionnaire / etc. included If this is a participatory / Public & Patient Involvement (PPI) project , it is possible that your data collection instrument will be co-constructed during the research and there is nothing to submit at this point to SREC. By ticking confirm here, you agree to submit the instrument to SREC, once finalised.		NA
f) Copy of permission letters / external ethical approvals to undertake research from relevant agencies/services included (if available)		NA
g) Have you applied for ethical approval for this project from another UCC ethics committee?	No	
h) If you are under academic supervision, your supervisor(s) have approved the wording of and co-signed this application prior to submission	Yes	
i) If this is a resubmission, all the revised and new text is highlighted in yellow		NA
j) I am aware that my final ethics approval is conditional on me submitting a revised final SREC application for filing which incorporates all reviewer recommendations (with changes highlighted), and that my full approval will not be sent to me until this is received by SREC.	Yes	

Resources and services

UCC Code of Research Conduct and Research Policies	EU Commission, Responsible Research and Innovation
UCC Child Safeguarding Statement	RRI Tools Website
Guidance Document for Conducting Internet Research	Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA)
Garda Vetting of UCC Staff	Irish Social Science Data Archive (quantitative datasets)
UCC Student Garda Vetting Policy	Health Service Executive National Consent Policy
UCC Data Protection Policy and Procedures	UCC IT Service Catalogue
UCC Library Research Data Service	UCC GDPR website
UCC Supplied Survey Platforms	UCC Guidance for Researchers Conducting Research with Vulnerable People
UCC Device Encryption Service	SREC FAQs and Amendment Process
Qualtrics SharePoint Site Qualtrics - UCC login	SREC Video Training Series
	UCC student population survey approval process

SECTION 2: APPLICANT(S) DETAILS

Name of UCC applicant(s)	Paul Trust	Date	23/10/2023
Name of Department / School / College / Research Institute / Centre / Unit	Computer Science	Contact Number	+353 0851871839
Correspondence Address	Western Gateway Building	UCC Email Address	120222601@umail.ucc.ie
Course Code/Name and year of course (students only)	PhD (Computer Science)	Name of supervisor(s) (students only)	Rosane Minghim
Is this a resubmission?	No	SREC Log No. (if a resubmission):	
Is this research funded?	Yes	If Yes, please provide name/s of Funding Agencies	Science Foundation Ireland Centre for Research Training in Advanced Network for Sustainable Societies (ADVANCE CRT)

Obtaining ethical approval from SREC does not free you from securing permissions and approvals from other institutional decision-makers and agency ethical review bodies. These bodies may accept the SREC approval, but researchers are responsible for ensuring they are compliant in advance of collecting data.

Project working title	Large Language Models for Analysis of Citizen Feedback Data
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If this is a collaborative project / community-based participatory / PPI research project / joint application with another agency, please complete this additional section:

Names of research partners / civil society organisations collaborating on this project	
Agency contact person and position	
Agency address	
Details of the partnership (Please clearly identify the roles and responsibilities held by each party in the partnership in relation to the different aspects of the research).	

SECTION 3: ETHICAL APPROVAL SELF-EVALUATION

If your answer falls into any of the shaded boxes below, please address each point later in the application form		YES	NO
		Use X or NA	
1	Do you consider that this project has significant ethical implications?		X
2	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	NA	
3	Will participation in this project be voluntary?	NA	
4	Will you obtain informed consent in writing from participants?	NA	
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, and (where relevant) omit questionnaire items / questions to which they do not wish to respond?	NA	
6a	Will data be treated with full confidentiality / anonymity (as appropriate)?	X	
6b	Does your project require you to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) in compliance with UCC Data Protection Policy ?		X
7	Will data be securely held for a minimum period of ten years after the completion of a research project, in line with the University's Code of Research Conduct (2021)?	X	
8	If results are published, will anonymity be maintained, and participants not identified? (see Q. 30 below regarding open data considerations, if relevant)	X	
9	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)?	NA	
10	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?		X
11	Will your participants include children / young persons (under 18 years of age)?		X
12	If yes to question 11, is your research in compliance with the UCC Child Safeguarding Statement which sets out the legal requirements under the Children First Act 2015?		NA
13	Will your project require you to carry out "relevant work" as defined in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016? (Relevant work constitutes any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults.)		X
14	Do you require official Garda Vetting through UCC before collecting data from children or vulnerable adults? (Please note that having a Garda Vetting through another body is not sufficient; a separate UCC Garda Vetting is always required for UCC researchers)		X
15	Will project participants include people with learning or communication difficulties?		X
16	Will project participants include patients / service users / clients? A service user or client is a person who is served by or uses the services under consideration as part of this research.		X
17	Will project participants include people in custody?		X
18	Will project participants include people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking, illegal Internet behaviour, crime, etc.)?		X
19a	Is there a realistic risk of participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress?		X
19b	Is there a realistic risk of the researcher experiencing either physical or psychological distress?		X
20	If yes to question 19a, has a proposed procedure for linking the participants to an appropriate support, including the name of a contact person, been given? (see Q. 33)	NA	
21	If yes to question 19b, has a proposed procedure/support structure been identified?	NA	
22	Are the research participants students with whom you have some current/previous connection (module coordinator, research supervisor, professional tutor, etc.)?		X
23	Will the research participants receive payment / gifts / voucher / or other incentives for participating in this study?		X
24	If your research is conducted on the internet, does it involve human participants? (e.g. through web surveys, social media, accessing or utilising data (information) generated by or about the participant/s; or involve observing human participants in their online interactions/behaviour). If yes, please review and utilise the UCC policy for conducting Internet Research .		X

SECTION 4: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Ethical review requires that you **reflect** and seek to **anticipate** ethical issues that may arise, rather than reproduce copious text from existing research proposals into these boxes. Entries should be **concise** and relevant to the point/question.

25. Very brief description of your study (15-25 words max.)

[e.g. This is a qualitative study of primary school teachers' attitudes towards religious teaching using focus groups to collect original data]

This is a research study that aims at using large language models to process and automate citizen feedback analysis.

26. What is your study about? (100-200 words max.)

In this study, we will explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence techniques, particularly Large Language Models, as a proof of concept to understand their efficacy in the automated analysis, classification, and summarization of citizen textual feedback. Leveraging machine learning for automated categorization could revolutionize the handling of feedback, facilitating the efficient routing of inquiries to the relevant departments. Additionally, we will assess the capability of large language models in summarizing inquiries, simplifying the comprehension of vast text volumes. We will also delve into the potential of these models for automated question answering, aiming for swift and reliable responses to citizen queries.

27. What are your research questions? / If your study approach is participatory / PPI, which does not normally involve research questions that are set in advance, please include a broad outline of your research focus / key themes. [Do not include your interview/survey questions in Q27].

1. How accurately can LLMs categorize citizen feedback into predefined categories compared to traditional text analysis methods?
2. How effective are LLMs at summarizing large volumes of citizen feedback for quick review by decision-makers?
3. Can LLMs be used to provide real-time or automated responses to citizen feedback, and if so, how does this impact citizen satisfaction?

28. Who are the participants in your study? Recruitment methods including details of how you will engage with participants, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria, detail permissions to be sought / secured already, and how will you recruit participants? / If your study approach is participatory/PPI, please indicate a proposed cohort which will be refined once the study progresses.

Participants may include any clients of the target government organization who may have submitted feedback or inquiries on their website in the collected dataset

29. Concise statement of anticipated ethical issues raised by your project. How do you intend to deal with them? Please address all items where your answers fell into a shaded box in the self-evaluation above. (350 words max.)

Participants may have revealed their identities in the feedback or inquiries they post. The organisation ensured that the dataset was anonymised before releasing them it to the research community. We will also review all text and anonymize any text containing identifiable information.

What apps and platforms can I use to collect, securely store, transcribe, and share research data? Please read before completing Q. 30

As researchers, it is imperative that we can assure participants in our study that their data will be collected, transported, stored, and archived securely; this is particularly important where sensitive personal details are involved. Exact details are required as to the use (and location) of locked cabinets, management of audio files, encryption of laptops, electronic data collection/storage/sharing, and so on. We have prepared this 1-page summary guidance to support you in articulating your plan; however, in the case of conflicting advice, official UCC policies will take precedence over this guidance.

I/we would like to undertake an online survey/interviews/focus groups

All data, both anonymised and non-anonymised, including sensitive personal data, can be collected, and stored on [UCC-Supplied Microsoft Products \(OneDrive, Teams, SharePoint, Microsoft Forms, etc.\)](#) **subject to logging in with your UCC credentials.**

Personal versions of Microsoft apps **should not** be used to collect and/or store research data. UCC also has a site licence for [Qualtrics](#) for online survey data collection for academic research and research adjacent projects; however, data should not be stored on this app.

Only apps/platforms that have been approved through the central UCC procurement system (Agresso) should be used for data collection, data sharing and data storage. If you would like to use an app/platform that is not covered here, please seek approval *prior* to applying to SREC. The first step to getting an app approved for use in research is to complete the "[IT System Request Form](#)". Please note that SREC has **no role** in approving apps/platforms for collecting, storing, transcribing, or sharing research data.

I/we have audio to be transcribed by a person/software

If transcription is being outsourced, the transcription service used needs to be trustworthy, reliable, and confidential. It is essential that data transferred outside of UCC is done securely (see [HEAnet FileSender](#)). Please note that the only software and cloud-based transcription services approved by UCC for use in research for transcribing audio data are the tools embedded in Microsoft's products: use the dictate tool in newer versions of Microsoft Word, and the dictate and transcribe audio file upload tool through the online Office 365 Microsoft Word when using your UCC credentials, and Microsoft Stream/Microsoft Teams when using your UCC credentials.

We are a team and would like to collaborate online (UCC colleagues only and/or UCC and external team members)

UCC-supplied collaboration and storage services like [Microsoft Teams and OneDrive](#), can facilitate you to safely collaborate and communicate on research studies with UCC staff and students, and to collaborate with partners outside of the university. Data saved in Microsoft Teams apps when you login with your UCC credentials are stored on the UCC's tenancies on Microsoft's servers. Data is encrypted in transit and at rest. Features such as version control, external sharing and audit logging are available. Microsoft Teams sites can also be archived after the research is completed. If you have questions about these services, please contact the [UCC IT Helpdesk](#). For collaborative projects, research data should only be stored on approved storage and collaboration services such as Microsoft Teams and OneDrive apps using your UCC credentials). If applying for ethical approval through SREC for collaborative, multi-agency projects and the data will not be stored in UCC / EU, please include comprehensive details on how these external services meet the relevant standards.

Although UCC students currently have access to institutional cloud storage, access to Microsoft Office 365 **does not** extend beyond their period of being a UCC student. Relying on one person's access to online data storage is not best practice. To ensure that the minimum data storage period of 10 years is adhered to, please discuss a long-term storage plan with your supervisor.

What I need to know about Research Data Storage

1. If data does not need to be identifiable, it should be converted to anonymous form as soon as is possible.
2. Do not use free versions of services and platforms for data collection, sharing data, and/or data storage.
3. All laptops and PCs used to access data must be [encrypted and password protected](#). Applicants should never store research data on a USB and only use an encrypted portable hard drive or an encrypted and password protected laptop for short-term storage until data has been anonymised.
4. Research data should only be stored on approved storage and collaboration services (see above). The personal versions of apps and services like OneDrive and Microsoft Teams **should not** be used to store research data. Further information on research data storage is available [on this UCC library website](#).
5. Where possible, **physical data** such as survey and consent forms etc. should be converted to electronic format as soon as possible and the originals shredded; however, if you need to retain physical data then it should be safely stored on premises at UCC in a locked cabinet/office.
6. In the exceptional case where there is a requirement for on premise storage (e.g. a requirement of a data-sharing agreement with a third party), [Research Data Store](#) can be accessed by researchers for storing research data. [UCC Network File Store](#) (NAS) can be used for secure storage if the researcher has access to it (UCC staff).
7. The HEAnet's [FileSender](#) is a way to share large files with strong encryption to any email address in a safe manner, which is useful for sending encrypted files to a transcriber or between team members outside of UCC if not using Microsoft Teams using your UCC credentials.
8. Microsoft Azure Information Protection - AIP - enables you to protect documents on your computer before sharing them, and also enables you to protect emails in Outlook before sending them (PCs only). [Click here for the Azure how to guide](#). To download the Azure software visit the [Microsoft Azure website](#).
9. Further details on IT Services Storage Options are available on the [UCC IT Service Storage Website](#).

30. Data. (Please provide your answers to these questions in the white area below; see advice on data collection and data storage on the previous page)

(a) How will you collect your data? Provide a brief description and justification of methods and data collection measures to be used.

- If conducting an online survey/questionnaire, what survey platform do you plan to use?
- If you plan to use a virtual meeting platform (Microsoft Teams using your UCC credentials to login, or another UCC-approved app/platform for research), please outline the steps you will take in the event of a security breach or an interruption during a virtual call.

We are planning to use secondary data, the data that has already been collected and labelled.

(b) If you are creating audio/video recordings, who will perform the transcription? (If transcription is being outsourced the transcription service needs to be trustworthy, reliable, and confidential. Ensure that data transfer is done securely. Recorded data must be deleted from a mobile recording device.)

NA

(c) When will the data recordings be deleted from the recording device and who will be assigned responsibility for this?

NA

(d) What type of data will you be storing? (Briefly describe the type of data you plan to collect).

We plan to leverage an already collected dataset, the variables that will be interest to our research may include the text column, the actual inquiry or feedback the organisation received, the corresponding categories, the dates the feedback was received and the actual reply if any from the organisation.

(e) How and where will you store your data?¹ (Provide details about both physical and electronic documents).

e1	I confirm that I will use UCC-approved collaboration and storage services like Microsoft Teams <u>and OneDrive</u> to store data.	X
e2	I confirm that I will store my research data on a UCC-approved system for the required period using my UCC login (see UCC Records Management Framework Guidance on Retention of Research Records and Data Conduct, Appendix 1)	X

(f) Who will you share the data with? Sample prompts: If you plan to make your raw research dataset available publicly as part of the open data movement, or if you are required to do so as part of funding/journal requirements, please address your protocol here (make explicit links to Q. 32 below and show that you have addressed this in your consent form and information sheet). For collaborative/community-based participatory research/PPI, please address issues such as shared ownership of data, will data be transferred (how?), publication of findings, etc. If your funder contractually requires you to give them access to the 'raw' dataset, examine relevant implications, including appropriate anonymisation, protocols for secure access to the dataset, etc.

NA

(g) If you are planning to analyse an existing dataset, please outline how the original consent process allows for your data analysis.

¹ Data management should follow the FAIR guiding principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability & Reusability). See, for example, Wilkinson, M. D. et al. (2016) [The FAIR Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management and Stewardship](#). It is required that all staff and student researchers store those data which are required to replicate research findings, and the information required to enable re-use of data. Details of the UCC policy on research data storage can be found in section 8 of the [UCC Code of Research Conduct](#). SREC advises against storing research data on non UCC approved cloud-based storage services. Physical data must be stored in a locked cabinet, and you must specify who has permission to access this data.

The collecting organization required people to agree that their feedback may be used in data analysis to improve their services before collecting feedback.
(h) If you are planning to request access to health/case files/personal records that were not created for research purposes, please address Data Protection considerations, provide a strong rationale, and comprehensively address associated ethical issues.
NA
(i) If you ticked yes to Q.6b in the SREC Checklist (above), have you submitted your DPIA? (You do not need to submit your DPIA with this SREC form)
NA

31. Arrangements for informing participants about the nature of the study and withdrawal from the study (e.g. information sheets, letters of invitation, social media information, participant recruitment, focus group welcome/schedule, withdrawal, etc.).
NA

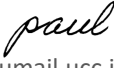
32. How you will ensure that participants provide informed consent (or assent if relevant)? cf. Question 4 - attach relevant form(s); address special considerations in terms of children / young people / vulnerable persons / adults who have difficulty in making decisions unaided. If your study approach is participatory/PPI , indicative forms are fine, but if there are substantial changes made with research partners, you will have to submit an SREC amendment request form)
NA

33. Outline of debriefing process at the end of the data collection process (cf. Question 9). If you answered Yes to Questions 19a or 19b, give details here. State what you will advise participants to do if they should experience problems (e.g. who to contact for help – provide name and contact details where required.)
NA

34. Estimated start date and duration of project (by months)
Estimated Start Date: December 2023 Project Duration: 12 months

35. Additional information of relevance to your application
NA

36. Declarations (clickable links to policies and codes quoted here are on the next page)	Yes	No	N/A
a) I/we agree that should there be unexpected ethical issues arising during the course of this study, that I/we will utilise my/our professional/disciplinary code of ethics, and/or notify UCC SREC, where appropriate.	X		
b) I/we have consulted the UCC Code of Research Conduct and believe my/our proposal is in line with its requirements.	X		
c) I/we have consulted the UCC Child Protection Policy and believe my/our proposal is in line with its requirements.	X		
d) I/we have consulted the UCC GDPR guidelines and declare that our project is GDPR compliant.	X		
e) Where required under the UCC GDPR Guidelines, I have submitted a DPIA to the UCC Information Compliance Department	X		
f) I/we have consulted the UCC Garda Vetting Guidelines, and where appropriate, researchers on this project have valid Garda vetting through UCC (having a valid Garda Vetting through another body is insufficient).	X		

g) In the event that my research data collection extends beyond the notified period outlined in my original SREC approval form, I agree to notify srec@ucc.ie via email.	X		
37. Signatures			
UCC Applicant(s) A picture of signatures pasted here is acceptable once the application is emailed to srec@ucc.ie from your UCC email address. However, if you cannot paste a picture of your signature, please type your name here and email this form to SREC using your UCC email account .	Academic Supervisor(s) / Principal Investigator(s) / Tutor(s) All academic supervisors (where applicable) must approve the contents of this application and sign this form. A picture of signatures pasted here is acceptable.		
Paul Trust  120222601@umail.ucc.ie			
Date: 02/11/2023	Date:		