ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Module Title:	Individual Computing Project
Module Code:	KV6013
Academic Year / Semester:	2025-26 / Semester 1
Module Tutor / Email (all queries):	Tom Bartindale tom.bartindale@northumbria.ac.uk
% Weighting (to overall module):	0%
Assessment Title:	Ethics Application
Date of Handout to Students:	Induction Week
Mechanism for Handout:	Module Blackboard Site
Deadline for Attempt Submission by Students:	**Thursday 6th November 2025, 11:59pm**
Mechanism for Submission:	Microsoft Form & Module Blackboard Site
Submission Format / Word Count	Answers to specific ethics-based questions as detailed in this document, depending on the type and scope of project you are conducting.
Date by which Work, Feedback and Marks will be returned:	6th December 2024
Mechanism for return of Feedback and Marks:	Feedback will be provided on the ethics application by the second marker for each un-successful attempt at approval. No marking required – as this is a hurdle.

Ethics and Your Project

Computing professionals should ensure that all their work is carried out in an ethical way. Professional bodies such as the British Computer Society have codes of conduct that attempt to ensure this. As members of an academic community, we are also concerned about ethics. This means that everyone doing a project needs to consider whether there are any ethical considerations that need to be considered. The University seeks to ensure that all research, including student projects, is carried out safely and in an ethical way.

> **You need to obtain ethical approval before ANY recruitment, data collection, or analysis takes place.**
>
> **Everyone needs to fill in the online Module Ethics Application form by week 6, whether your planned activities require ethical approval or not.**
>
> **This is a module hurdle.**

Naturally, some ethical issues are common to all projects. For example, no project may break any applicable laws; any project that uses personal data must ensure that it is properly handled; no project may use software that is not properly licensed; and so on. Other issues can be relevant depending on the subject area. In computing projects, the following are commonly areas that need to be given some thought:

- Consent
- Confidentiality of personal data
- Data storage and retention
- Commercial confidentiality

Some projects may also involve the following:

- Work with children, young people or other vulnerable groups
- Computer security, misuse and vulnerabilities
- Risk to the student, other participants, or to the university
- Organisations with particular requirements for internal approval

The University's Ethics and Integrity web page gives further information about these matters, where you can also find the risk assessment form, the consent form and the information sheet.
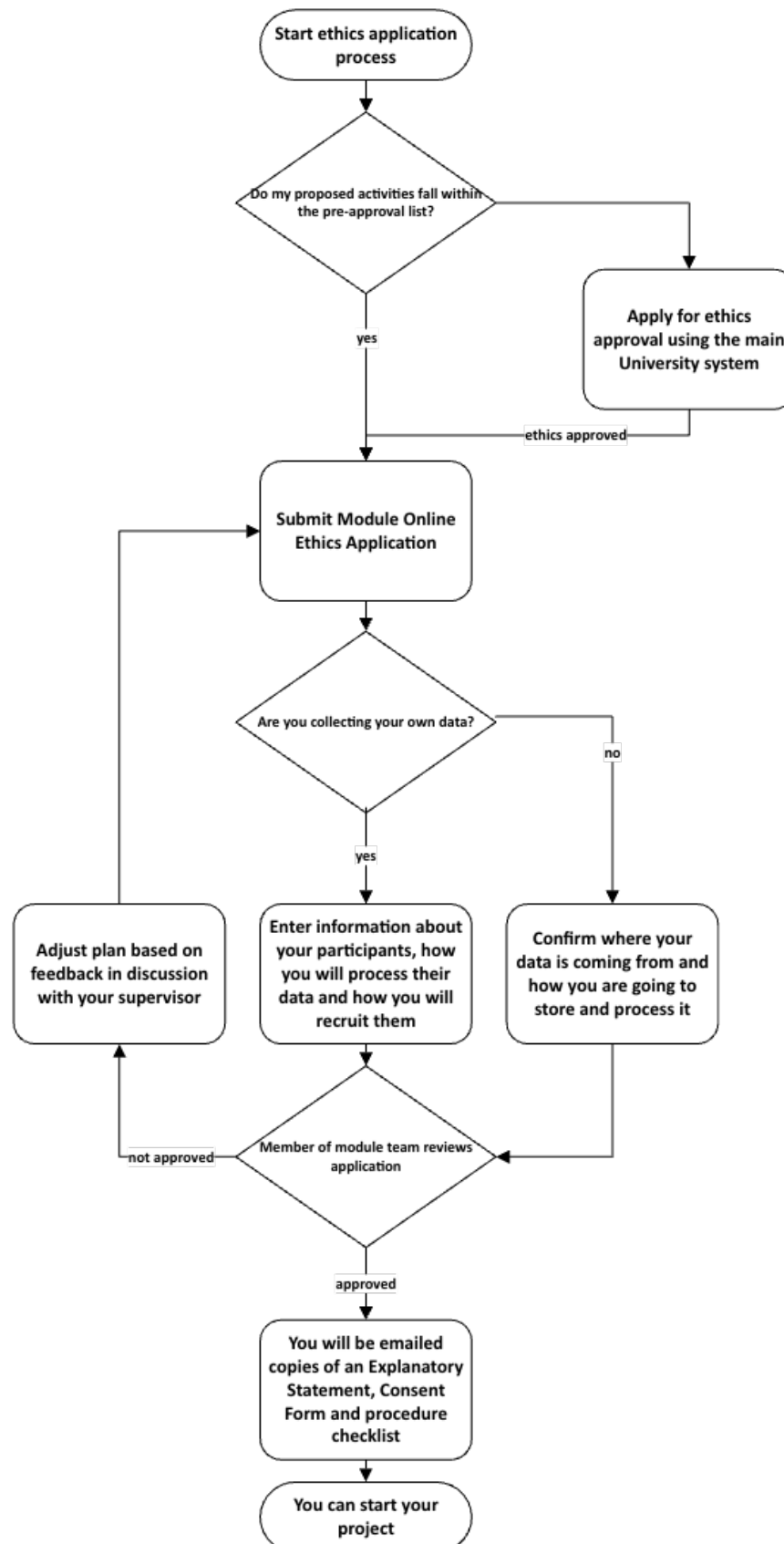
What you need to do

All research in the university requires ethical approval. Undergraduate projects are considered to be research, and there is a simple process for giving ethical approval to every project. It is a requirement of the University that every student who undertakes a project must give due consideration to ethical issues, and that the university records that this has been done in an auditable way. There is also an obligation to consider any Health and Safety issues. **You need to follow this process even if you don't think your project has any ethical implications at all.**

Ethics Approval is a pass/fail component in the assessment. You MUST pass the Ethics Approval to pass the module.

There are three categories of ethical risk at Northumbria – **Low** Risk, **Proportionate** Risk and **High** Risk. We have pre-approval on the module for most activities that fall into the Low and Medium risk categories. If you work falls within these, then approval can be very simple and quick. Even with this pre-approval, you still need to get explicit approval for your project, using the online process for this module.

Follow the flow chart below to work out which process you will need to follow:

Start ethics application process

Do my proposed activities fall within the pre-approval list?

→ **Apply for ethics approval using the main University system**

yes

ethics approved

Submit Module Online Ethics Application

Are you collecting your own data?

no

yes

Adjust plan based on feedback in discussion with your supervisor

Enter information about your participants, how you will process their data and how you will recruit them

Confirm where your data is coming from and how you are going to store and process it

Member of module team reviews application

not approved

approved

You will be emailed copies of an Explanatory Statement, Consent Form and procedure checklist

You can start your project

Pre-approved activities

The activities require that you fill in the Module Ethics Form with the required information and should be easy to approve. These are categorised by the university as 'low risk' or 'proportional risk' projects.

- Gathering data or information from human participants (e.g., via questionnaire / interview/survey/experiment/ VR)
- Collecting personal data, i.e. name, email, home address, computer IP address, phone number etc.
- Analysis of secondary data not in the public domain (e.g. archive material that require organisational membership)
- The collection or use of information which is 'commercially sensitive'
- Financial inducements other than expenses and compensation for time
- Gathering data/information at a physical location external to Northumbria University campuses, franchised locations, and not your normal place of work
- Individuals or groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial or continued access to participants (e.g. NGOs, community leaders)
- Secondary data that is in the public domain (e.g. financial data bases)
- Systematic Reviews
- Meta-analyses of secondary data
- Black Letter Law

Activities that require full ethics application

If your project includes any of the following, then it is NOT covered by the pre-approved module ethics, and you will need to fill in a full University Ethics Application.
You or your supervisor should discuss the project with the Module Tutor as early as possible, so that the necessary consultation can take place and time is not wasted.

Participant groups:
- Work in a school
- Contact with children or young people under 18.
- Contact with vulnerable adults or anyone who may not be able to give informed consent
- Research with those who might lack capacity to consent, for example, a learning disability, dementia, or cognitive impairment.
- The prison service, offenders or participants on probation.
- Direct testing on animals or materials derived from animals.
- Recruitment or collection of data from patients, via the NHS, and some social care settings (e.g., home, or residential care).

Activities:

- Projects involving the National Health Service
- Research with potentially vulnerable participants or groups, including people under 18 (which may require DBS clearance)
- The collection of bodily tissue e.g. blood, saliva, urine samples from living persons (which may require licence under the HTA and additional training)
- Any project where there may be intellectual property or contractual issues
- Any project where non-disclosure may be required
- Any other project that raises concerns that are not satisfactorily covered by the usual procedures for consent and confidentiality.
- The use of ionising radiation
- The collection of bodily tissue from deceased persons
- A health-related study or clinical trial of an investigational medicinal product or a medical device.
- Discussion (e.g., interviews) of highly sensitive topics that may cause undue stress to participants, and researchers, including, but not exclusively: sexual behaviour, drug use; abuse or exploitation; trauma; pornography.
- Funding from a source that may be controversial (e.g., due to the nature of the funder, or a conflict of interest).
- Covert methods of investigation or deception.
- Research with international partners, or research undertaken outside of the UK where there may be issues of local practice and political sensitivities. (In these instances, it will be necessary to act in accordance with the legal and ethics review requirements in the countries included in the research and demonstrate awareness of these.) NB this does not automatically include Amsterdam Campus research activity.
- Access to records of personal or sensitive confidential information, including genetic or other biological information concerning identifiable individuals
- Intrusive interventions including the use of drugs or other substances (e.g., food, drink, placebos or drugs); and, or, procedures involving physical distress (e.g. prolonged testing) or emotional distress (e.g. stress or anxiety), that are greater than those you would encounter in everyday life.
- Work that involves direct observation of, or participation in, activities during which it is anticipated that illegal activity, or regulatory breach is likely to occur (e.g., hunting, drug dealing, accessing the dark web, hacking).
- Access to or collection of data, information, materials (e.g., magazines, publications, websites, and social media) relating to extremism, radicalisation or terrorism (including extreme or terror groups).
- Funding/ sponsorship from, or the involvement of, the UK Ministry of Defence, Military (UK and International), and or, EU Security funding call.
- The collection of data/information that might be confidential or classified (e.g., protected by the Official Secrets Act)

- The funding body e.g., ESRC funded projects require REC review.

What do I need to know to fill in the form?

You need to discuss the following with your supervisor – however it is your responsibility to write the specific wording and create and resources required for the submission.

- What is your primary research question?
- Write a short summary of the purpose of this study
- If you are planning on collecting data from people yourself:
  - How many participants will you recruit?
  - Who are your participants, and where will you recruit them from? Provide any recruitment materials (e.g. posters) as extra material at the end of the submission
  - What is involved for a participant? What will they be asked to do?
  - What reasons are there for a participant to be ineligible for this study (i.e. excluded)
  - What are the possible disadvantages/risks in taking part?
  - What are the possible benefits of taking part?
  - Select which methods you will be using from the list.
  - Confirm where you will be running your study
  - Confirm you have read the relevant health and safety policies (shown on form), and upload any additional risk assessments that your supervisor has indicated will be required.
  - If you are using secondary data, where is it from and how did you get it?
  - What identifiable data are you collecting from your participants?
  - What non-identifiable information are you collecting from your participants?
  - Select which methods you plan to use to analyse the data
  - Upload any additional files such as recruitment posters.
- If you are using existing data or secondary data:
  - Select where you are getting your data from

What to do if your project plan changes

If you identify a need to change what has been approved, you should raise this with your supervisor and possibly amend your ethics and receive further approval before data collection commences. Conducting research without this approval or conducting research that falls outside of the specified activities you have been approved for (such as changing your participant group or method of collection) or failing to follow the correct procedure with

participants (such as following consent processes) will be regarded as a 'breach of ethics'. Such a breach will result in all work related to the data you collected (i.e. results, analysis, discussion, conclusion) being void from your assessment and viva and will not be marked.

Ethics and your final submission

As well as product deliverables, you will include copies of data such as interview transcripts, questionnaires, consent forms, and experimental results in an evidence folder. These may be submitted as appendices to your report or a shared folder, or some combination as appropriate. Data relating to individuals should be anonymous. Consent forms and other documents that might identify participants should be put in the evidence folder. The evidence folder's purpose is to ensure that data is available for audit and eventual disposal: it is not an assessed deliverable.

After your project finishes

The contents of the evidence file will be destroyed after the exam boards. When you receive your final result (after marking), you should also delete all soft copies of the data, using a secure deletion method. Before you do this, make sure the supervisor has access to the shared folder. If you have a referral, 'option to retrieve' or deferral, and need to use the data again, you need to coordinate with your supervisor to retrieve the data folder.

Assessment Regulations

You are advised to read the guidance for students regarding assessment policies. They are available online here. (http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/university-services/academic-registry/quality-and-teaching-excellence/assessment/guidance-for-students/)

Late submission of work

Where coursework is submitted without approval, after the published hand-in deadline, the following penalties will apply.

For coursework submitted up to 1 working day (24 hours) after the published hand-in deadline without approval, **10% of the total marks available for the assessment** (i.e., 100%) **shall be deducted** from the assessment mark.

Coursework submitted more than 1 working day (24 hours) after the published hand-in deadline without approval will be regarded as not having been completed. **A mark of zero will be awarded for the assessment and the module will be failed**, irrespective of the overall module mark.

These provisions apply to all assessments, including those assessed on a Pass/Fail basis.

The full policy can be found here.

Word limits and penalties

If the assignment is within +10% of the stated word limit no penalty will apply.

The word count is to be declared on the front page of your assignment and the assignment cover sheet. The word count does not include your appendices.

Please note, in text citations [e.g. (Smith, 2011)] and direct secondary quotations [e.g., "*dib-dab nonsense analysis*" (Smith, 2011 p.123)] are INCLUDED in the word count.

The full Word Limits Policy is available here.

Academic Misconduct

In all assessed work you should take care to ensure that the work you submit is your own. The University takes academic dishonesty and cheating very seriously, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you don't attempt to cheat or become victim to cheating.

There are many different forms of academic misconduct or 'cheating'. Plagiarism is the most common and both the University library and your academic tutors are able to provide further guidance on proper citation and referencing in your assessed work.

The full Academic Misconduct Policy is available [here](#).

Useful guidance for avoiding academic misconduct can be found [here](#).