

## **Key Advice to Ensure Successful Ethics/IPR Application**

Recently a number of submissions for full ethical approval or for independent peer review (IPR) have had to be rejected and resubmitted because of problems which could easily have been prevented. This section is aimed at giving advice to ensure that this does not happen with your proposal. These problems include:

1. Responses to questions which don't address the question fully.

Sometimes applicants appear to have cut and pasted from another document but in such a way that inappropriate content has been pasted into a particular section. This can also sometimes mean that the answer is inappropriately long.

2. Insufficient evidence that the research is needed.

You need to show why it is worth conducting the research. Therefore the literature review needs to show that there is a gap which the proposed research will fill. The literature review here has a different role from what it would have in a dissertation. It only needs to go into sufficient detail to justify the need for the research. It does not have to be exhaustive.

3. Failure to have clear aims.

You need to make clear what questions your research is designed to answer.

4. Failure to show how aims will be addressed by the research.

There needs to be a clear link between what the research involves and the questions it is designed to answer.

5. Failure to justify the analytic method.

A typical example is where the method has been shown as IPA but no explanation has been given as to why this is more appropriate than another qualitative method.

6. The misuse of inclusion/exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria aren't simply the negation of the inclusion criteria. Details of exclusion criteria only need be given if they go beyond what would be excluded by failure to fulfil the inclusion criteria. Thus if the inclusion criteria includes 'people aged 18 years or more', you don't need an exclusion criterion of 'people who are under 18 years'.

7. Failure to provide a full set of signatures/documents

You need to ensure that all appropriate signatures are obtained and all relevant documents included in the application.

8. Patient Information Sheets and Consent Forms

These are sometimes inappropriately worded with technical information included which may not be understood by your participants. Further information can be accessed from:

<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/applications/guidance/>

9. Retention of data

The University requires that you make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others and should normally be preserved and accessible for ten years.

10. For Data Security advice when working off campus please click [here](#) (PDF, file size: 18.89KB)

## General Information

11. The distinction between an ethical and a scientific issue can be blurred as a poorly designed study will be unethical because participants' time will be wasted.
12. A number of documents are to be presented outside the University and need to do the University credit. These include the IPR form, questionnaires, information sheets and consent forms. To represent the University such documents need to achieve an appropriately professional standard. This includes spelling and grammar.
13. In addition, documents which are for use with non-specialists need to avoid unnecessary jargon and technical language.
14. Timescale for Approval process - care should be taken to work back from the intended start date for the project taking account of both University and NHS Research Ethics Committee ((REC) timescales and submission dates which will fit the requirements
15. It is expected that students will discuss their project applications in detail with their project supervisors. Students /Supervisors and staff may wish to consult experienced colleagues including the Chairs of their Faculty Research Ethics Committees/ Independent Peer Review Panels about issues arising.
16. It may be prudent to contact the Trust managers required to give permission for the proposed research to use/have access to NHS resources at an early stage.
17. It may also be particularly helpful to seek guidance on substantive issues arising for projects which require NHS REC approval from Professor David White, who is in charge of the Independent Peer Review Process, or Professor David Clark-Carter, the Chair of the Faculty of Health and Faculty of Sciences Research Ethics Panel.
18. In some circumstances there may be consultation with Dr Jim Radcliffe, the Chair of the University Academic Ethics Sub-Committee.
19. Process advice can often be given by Helen Sutton, [h.sutton@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:h.sutton@staffs.ac.uk) Administrative Officer for the Faculty Research Ethics/Independent Peer Review Panels.
20. The prime web resource about NHS ethical approval procedures is the website for the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) at [www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk) This site has a link to the standard electronic application form for NHS Research Ethics Committees (IRAS). The site also includes guidelines for researchers about patient information sheets and a draft for a consent form.

Bearing the above points in mind when completing an application for ethical approval or an IPR form could prevent delay in achieving approval.