

Research ethics & Applying for ethical approval for your project

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Basic concepts in research

- **Research methodology:** Systematic framework used to conduct research, including theoretical approach, research design, techniques employed to gather and analyse data
- **Method(s) for data collection:** Gathering relevant information (data) for research purposes via methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests, online experiments
- **Method(s) for data analysis:** Examining, coding, quantitatively or qualitatively analysing and interpreting data to uncover patterns, trends, and insights relevant to the research question(s)/objective(s)
- **Participants:** Individuals or groups of people involved in a research study who provide data or information via **data collection tools** such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, etc.

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Why is ethical approval important?

- To maintain ethical standards in our research in accordance with the law
- To protect the dignity and rights of our research participants
- To ensure that our data collection efforts are justified
- To provide reassurance to the public about the quality of our research
- To protect ourselves as researchers

What kind of research needs ethical clearance?



- All research involving **human participants** must undergo an ethics review
- Ethical approval must be obtained before data collection can begin

Does this project need ethical approval?

Research project 1

Sociolinguistics

Record conversations between multilingual speakers in which they switch between languages. Transcribe the conversations and analyse the linguistic material. Your analysis should also include an account of why the speakers mixed the languages in their interaction (e.g. was it because of a change in the topic of conversation?)

Does this project need ethical approval?

Research project 2

TEFL/TESOL

Are English language teaching (ELT) materials culture- and value-neutral? What ideas/values/identities are promoted in popular ELT materials, and what are the implications for teaching and learning? Perform a review of a corpus of publicly available materials to identify any patterns.



Does this project need ethical approval?

Research project 3

Descriptive linguistics

How does the formal description of a syntactic structure in Language X compare with speakers' use of that structure? Analyse information in published grammars and collect acceptability judgements on different uses of the structure from speakers of Language X.



Does this project need ethical approval?

Research project 4

Psycholinguistics

Do bilingual speakers have superior attentional control compared with monolingual speakers? Investigate this question by administering a Stroop task to a group of bilingual adults and a group of monolingual adults.

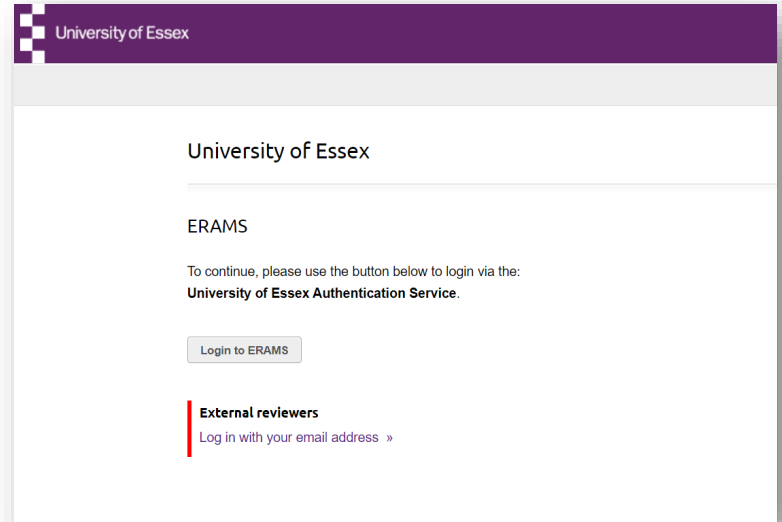
Applying for ethical approval: Step by step

- (1) Read the guidelines for ethical approval and check out the resources for applicants on the REO website:

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/research-governance/ethical-approval-resources-for-applicants>

- (2) Access the online application form on ERAMS:

<https://erams.essex.ac.uk/do/essex-login/login>



Applying for ethical approval: Step by step

(3) Prepare key information before completing the ERAMS form:

- Short summary of your project (1-2 paragraphs) with a focus on your research methodology
- Participant information sheet
- Consent form(s)

Other attachments:

- Your proposal
- Your instruments (if applicable)

(4) Email these documents to your supervisor for review and revise them if required

Applying for ethical approval: Step by step

(5) Complete the online form on ERAMS and upload the required attachments

If any questions arise while you're filling in the form, save your work, consult your supervisor, then continue when you know what you need to do

(6) Submit the online form for your supervisor's official approval

Applying for ethical approval:

After you have submitted your application

- Review 1: Your supervisor
- Review 2: Departmental ethics officer (on behalf of Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee 2)
- In most cases, the departmental ethics officer decides whether your application can be approved or not
- Exceptions: Projects funded by UKRI awards and any high-risk research
- → Review 3: Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee 2

Outcome A:

Approval 😊

- You will receive an official email via the ERAMS system stating that your application has been approved
- Conditions of approval are stated too

Outcome B:

Revisions required ☹️

- “Request for further information”
- → You will receive an official email via the ERAMS system with details on what you need to amend
- Make the amendments and ask your supervisor for help if you are unsure
- The process starts again...

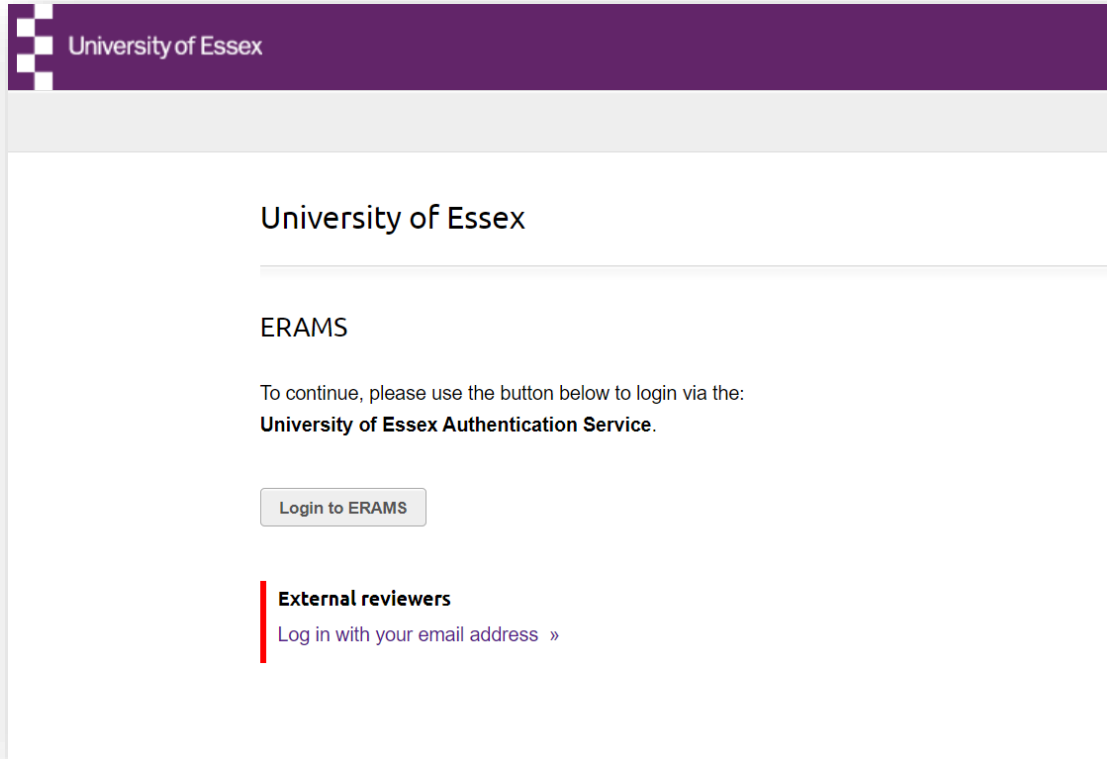
Allow plenty of time

- Ethical approval process can take several weeks
- The more carefully you work right from the start, the faster the process will be
- You need to allow a minimum of 2 weeks between submitting your application and the projected start of data collection

Remember:

you cannot start your project without ethical approval

STARTING AN APPLICATION: Login page



The screenshot shows the login page for ERAMS at the University of Essex. At the top left, there is a purple header with the University of Essex logo (a 3x3 grid of squares) and the text "University of Essex". Below the header, the page content is centered. It starts with the text "University of Essex" followed by a horizontal line. Underneath is the heading "ERAMS". A paragraph of text reads: "To continue, please use the button below to login via the: **University of Essex Authentication Service.**" Below this text is a button labeled "Login to ERAMS". Further down, there is a section for "External reviewers" indicated by a vertical red line to the left of the text. Underneath this section is a link that says "Log in with your email address »".

University of Essex

ERAMS

To continue, please use the button below to login via the:
University of Essex Authentication Service.

Login to ERAMS

External reviewers
Log in with your email address »

STARTING AN APPLICATION

University of Essex

Quick search Search Browse Recent Add Tray 1 Tasks 6 Natalia Ro

< Back

Start a new ethics application

Home

University of Essex
Arts and Humanities
Science and Health
Social Sciences

Committees
Upcoming meetings

Guides

Accessibility

University of Essex
I wish to create an ethics application for a project with the University of Essex. Please note that some projects may require a favourable ethical opinion from an external review body, e.g. NHS Research Ethics Committee, Social Care Research Ethics Committee, Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee, HMPPS, or another research ethics committee if, for example, the research is based outside the UK. Please seek advice from the REO Research Governance Team (reo-governance@essex.ac.uk) if you are unsure or if you have any queries.

Register a favourable opinion from an external review
I have received a favourable ethical opinion from an ethics review body external to the University of Essex (e.g. another university's ethics committee, an NHS Ethics Committee, the MODREC) and I wish to register the external approval with the University of Essex. I am listed on the application for ethical approval, and / or named in the confirmation of ethical approval or favourable ethical opinion letter. Please seek advice from the REO Research Governance Team (reo-governance@essex.ac.uk) if you have any queries.

NAVIGATING THE FORM

Edit Application: Ethics ETH2223-0267: Dr Natalia Rodriguez Vicente

Project overview Project details Data Risk

Project overview

Title of project *



Do you object to the title of your project being published? *

- Yes
 No



Applicant(s) *

Dr Natalia Rodriguez Vicente



Add another

How would you like to submit your application? *

- Academic Staff
 Postgraduate Taught Student



Supervisor(s) *



Add another

Proposed start date of research *

Your start date must be at least 2 weeks from today.



NAVIGATING THE FORM

University of Essex ERAM

Search Browse Recent Add Tray 1 Tasks 7 Natalia Rodriguez Vicente Help

Edit Application: Ethics ETH2223-0267: Dr Natalia Rodriguez Vicente

Project overview Project details Participant details Informed consent Confidentiality and anonymity Data Risk

Please complete all the required fields.

Project overview

AWAITING APPROVAL

The screenshot displays the ERAMS interface for an ethics application. At the top, the University of Essex logo is on the left, and the user's name 'Phineas Wenlock' and role 'Finish' are on the right. A navigation bar includes a search box and links for Search, Browse, Recent, Add, TESTING, Tasks (10), Phineas Wenlock, and Help. The main content area is titled 'Ethics application ETH1819-0083' and includes an 'Edit' button. A left sidebar lists navigation options: Home, University of Essex (with sub-links for Humanities, Science and Health, Social Sciences), Committees (with sub-link for Upcoming meetings), and Guides. The application details are as follows:

Title	Ethics application ETH1819-0083
Application ID	ETH1819-0083
Researcher	Mr Phineas Wenlock
Project	Test
Date	09 May 2019
Academic year	2018 - 2019
Ethics reviewers	Research and Enterprise Office

The 'Application timeline' section shows the following events:

- Ethics Approval**
 - Awaiting REO Research Governance Team decision**
 - Phineas Wenlock started the Ethics approval process 09 May 2019, 12:58
 - Phineas Wenlock confirmed statements - view... 13 May 2019, 12:46
 - Phineas Wenlock submitted the Ethics application 13 May 2019, 12:46

On the right side, the 'STATUS' is 'Awaiting REO Research Governance Team decision'. The 'CURRENTLY WITH' section lists 'REO Research Governance Team'. The 'APPLICATION' section shows 'Ethics application'. There are buttons for 'Download printable PDF...', 'Add note', and 'REVIEWERS'. The 'REVIEWERS' section shows 'Research and Enterprise Office' with a status of 'considering application'.

Supporting documentation templates on Moodle

Undergraduate projects: LG831, LG832

Postgraduate projects: LG981, LG994, LA899

- Participant information sheet
- Consent forms:
 - Written consent – standard for most projects
 - Oral consent – in exceptional circumstances
 - Consent for projects using online questionnaires ONLY
- Adapt the relevant templates by editing the parts highlighted in yellow to fit your project
- You may need more than one consent form (full sample/sub-sample; minors/parents or guardians)

Supporting documentation: Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet

[Title of the project]

[Date]

My name is X and I am an undergraduate/a postgraduate student, studying X in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of this study?

[Explain the aim(s) of your study in 3-4 sentences that can be understood easily by participants. Avoid acronyms throughout, also in the title of your project.]

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you [state here the reason(s) why these participants are needed for your study, i.e. your inclusion criteria].

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. [If applicable, e.g. in the case of research with classroom learners, add: Withdrawal will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies.]

What will happen to me if I take part?

This study requires participants to [briefly summarise here what your participants will be expected to do. Give enough details to allow for an informed decision, i.e. spell out how many sessions there are going to be and how long each session will take.]

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

[Delete this section if it doesn't apply. Otherwise, indicate whether and how you will audio- or video-record participants and what will happen to the recordings, e.g. recordings will be transcribed and transcripts will be analysed.]

Will I be compensated for taking part?

[Delete this section if it doesn't apply. Otherwise, indicate the nature of the compensation, e.g. a gift voucher worth X, refreshments during the interview.]

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefit of this study is that it will further our understanding of [briefly explain here what the expected benefits of the study are. If applicable, add potential benefits to participants themselves, e.g. that they will have the opportunity to practise Language X, that it might be interesting for them to reflect on Y].

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part means that you must give up some of your time. [Give details, e.g. the interview will take about X minutes, the online experiment will take about Y minutes, etc.]. When you participate in the study, the utmost care will be taken that no harm to your psychological wellbeing, physical health values or dignity is effected.

How will my data be stored and who will have access to the data?

Your data will be stored in pseudonymised form, i.e. your name and other identifiers will be replaced by a unique code. To reduce the risk of disclosure, identifiers will be stored separately from the research data. Data will be kept [say where, e.g. in my password-protected laptop, in a locked filing cabinet] and will only be accessible to myself, the researcher [add your name] and my supervisor [add the name]. The data will be kept until [insert date] after which it will be destroyed.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Your participation will only be known to myself, the researcher [insert your name and, if applicable, your supervisor's name].

How will my data be used and in what form will the data be shared further?

Your data will be analysed as part of the study. It may then be reported in [insert as applicable: my dissertation/thesis/research publication(s)]. The data used will be in pseudonymised form, so participants will not be identifiable.

Withdrawing my data

If you decide to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher by [insert date by which you can still remove data, i.e. in time before your analysis is expected to be complete and your work written up], and your data will be destroyed. Withdrawal of your data after the given date will not be possible.

What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?

The University processes personal data for the primary purpose of research as set out in Article 6 (1)(e) of the UK GDPR. Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. For more information on data protection legislation and your rights, visit the University's data protection and research activity [webpage](#). For any queries, email dp@essex.ac.uk.

Ethical approval

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee 2 and has been given approval.

Concerns and complaints

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the researcher [insert your name], using the contact details below. If are still concerned, if you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction or you feel that you cannot approach the researcher, please contact the ethics officer in the department responsible for this project, Dr Karen Roehr-Brackin, kroehr@essex.ac.uk; if you are still not satisfied, please contact the University of Essex REO Research Integrity Manager (reo-integrity@essex.ac.uk). Please include the ERAMS reference which can be found in the footer of this page so that the study can be identified, the name or a description of the study, the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make. [Make sure you put the reference number from the ERAMS online application form in the footer of your ethics documents.]

Contact details

Researcher
[your name, department and email address]

Supervisor
[your supervisor's name, department and email address]

Supporting documentation: Consent form



CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: **X**
Researcher: **X** (Department of Language and Linguistics)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated **[insert date of your participant info sheet]** for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

3. Participating involves **[briefly state what exactly participants are expected to do and approximately how long it will take, also state if they will be audio/video recorded]**.

4. I understand that any identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher **[and supervisor, if applicable]**, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

5. I understand that my pseudonymised data will be used in a report, which will summarise the findings of the project. The report will be submitted to the University of Essex as part of my coursework.

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

Any questions?



kroehr@essex.ac.uk

Karen Roehr-Brackin

Research with minors

- Only individuals aged 18 or over can give informed consent
- If your project involves participants under the age of 18 (minors), you need to obtain consent from parents/guardians/carers
- Depending on their exact age, participants under 18 should additionally be asked for their **assent** (= agreement by someone who cannot give legal consent)

Research abroad

- ERAMS form asks whether a project involves research abroad
- Answer options are currently unclear for **online research** where the researcher is in the UK and participants take part from abroad
- Practical workaround:
- If you recruit participants in a specific country (e.g. EFL learners in Japan) → research abroad
- If you recruit from many different countries (e.g. EFL teachers around the world) → NOT research abroad