School of Business & Humanities Ethics Policy

Version Control & Change History

Date	Details	Effective From
2014	School Ethics Policy Developed	January 2014
2017	Updated – reflect changes to Institute Ethics Policy	September 2017
2019	Updated – reflect changes to Committee Membership	January 2019
2023	Updated – reflect changes to Institute Ethics Policy	November 2023

1.0 Purpose of Policy

The School of Business & Humanities is actively involved in conducting research and supervising research at faculty and student levels. The School operates within the principles of the DkIT Ethics Policy approved by Academic Council and reflects changes and updates made at Institute Level.

2.0 Application & Scope

If there is any doubt if ethical approval is required, the researcher should discuss their proposed research with a member of the School of Business and Humanities Ethics Committee prior to conducting any research.

1. All School of Business & Humanities staff who are involved in research. This includes staff in academic, research, technical and administrative roles within the School.
2. All students – postgraduate and undergraduate who conduct research.
3. External researchers who wish to conduct research within DkIT School of Business and Humanities.

All research within the School of Business & Humanities which has ethical implications must go through the ethical review process. This includes externally funded research, postgraduate research proposals, and any undergraduate and postgraduate research activity. Research projects that have the potential to cause ethical concerns are referred to the committee for consideration.

3.0 Meetings of School Ethics Committee

The School Ethics Committee meets twice per annum with additional meetings convened as required. Meetings are convened by the Chair and documentation for consideration is circulated in advance by the Committee Administrator.

4.0 School Ethics Committee Membership

Name	**Area**
Dr. Patricia Moriarty (Chair)	Head of School
Dr. Annaleigh Margey	Head of Dept of Humanities
Prof. Collette Henry	Head of Dept of Business Studies
Mr. Shane Hill	Head of Dept of Management & Financial Studies
Dr Kevin Burns	Head of Dept of Hospitality Studies
Mr Conor Reidy	Law Lecturer
Ms Susan Murphy	Committee Administrator

5.0 Introduction

Research is understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances and artefacts.

Governance of research can be defined as setting standards; defining mechanisms to deliver standards; monitoring and assessing arrangements; improving research quality and safeguarding the public by enhancing ethical and scientific quality, promoting good practice, reducing adverse incidents, ensuring that lessons are learned and preventing poor performance and misconduct.

5.1 Policy Statement

All research being conducted by staff or students of the School of Business and Humanities must be subjected to appropriate ethical scrutiny prior to proceeding. Such research must be reviewed to ensure it is viable and valid, that the investigators are appropriately qualified and that there are no unacceptable risks to participants or researchers. Initial checks are undertaken at Lecturer/Research Supervisor level and Head of Department level before being referred to the School Ethics Committee where it is judged to have ethical implications. Appropriate records of all such research must be maintained by the researchers and the School.

5.2 Policy Aims

The School of Business and Humanities policy aims to ensure that:

1. all research proceeds with the prior knowledge and appropriate consent of the School Ethics Committee;
2. all research adheres to current ethical guidelines and any relevant legislation;
3. the safety, well-being, rights and dignity of participants are safeguarded through a process of ethical review;
4. the School of Business and Humanities and DkIT is safeguarded through a process of ethical review;
5. all research respects the diversity of individuals and groups that might be involved.

This policy aims to address the main principles of research governance and ethical review and in doing so, to provide guidance on the minimum standards the School of Business and Humanities at DkIT expects in all research. The guidance, however, is not exhaustive and researchers should ensure that all matters relevant to their research are properly addressed. Researchers are ultimately responsible for ensuring their project meets the appropriate scientific and ethical standards.

5.3 Ethical Principles

Scientific Design and Conduct
Researchers are required to employ transparency in their methods and design to enable ethical scrutiny during the review process.

Qualifications
All researchers must be appropriately qualified and have sufficient experience to lead or conduct the research. In the case of undergraduate and postgraduate student researchers, School research groups/centres, and external researchers, should ensure that adequate training has been given.

Consent
Free and informed consent of all research participants is one of the most important principles. In general this means that:

- participants should have the capacity to consent;
- all consent forms and information sheets should be clear and easy to understand;
- participants should be provided with all of the information including any possible risks;
- participants should be made aware that participation is voluntary;
- participants should be made aware that they can withdraw at any time and without subsequent effect to them;
- no pressure should be exercised in gaining consent;
- no unreasonable inducement should be offered in gaining consent;
- participants should be assured of confidentiality in so far as possible.

General Principles
The following principles must underpin research undertaken within the School of Business and Humanities:

Autonomy: Participants must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their part in the research entails and what risks, if any, may arise. Participation must be entirely voluntary, free from any coercion, duress or any other offer of inappropriate incentives. Participants must be free to withdraw their participation for any or no reason and must be made aware of this right.
Consent to participate should be documented and explicit.

Beneficence: Research should be methodologically sound and worthwhile. Benefits should outweigh potential risks.

Non-maleficence: Harm must be avoided and appropriate precautions taken to mitigate risk.

Privacy: The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected and secured. Data gathering must be compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Access to any personal data stored electronically should be restricted to the researcher(s) and their supervisors only and files should be protected. Particular care is needed in the security of laptops. Data should be stored in a cloud-based storage facility with appropriate password protection.

Integrity: The independence of the research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit. Any aspect of the research that might call into question its independence from outside interests or any possible conflicts of interest should be declared in writing at the outset.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The researcher has responsibility for:

(i) Ensuring that the research is conducted in line with the above principles, and,
(ii) Ensuring that the research is subjected to appropriate ethical review and approval.

The researcher is also required to conduct research with participants in accordance with the principles below:

a) Obtain Voluntary Informed Consent of participants who should understand and agree to their part without any duress.
b) Participants should be advised why their participation is being requested, the purpose of the research, who will have access to the data, how and the findings will be reported and used and how long the data will be stored for, and how it will be stored.
c) Normally avoid any element of subterfuge and ensure any elements of subterfuge or deception that may arise are declared in the ethics application form.
d) Advise the participant of the right to withdraw for any or no reason, at any time prior to the submission or publication of the research.
e) Give detailed consideration to additional ethical issues that may arise where potential participants include children or 'adults at risk', those under the age of 18, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults. The use of incentives to encourage participation must not amount to either undue influence to consent nor contain any element of duress. This is of particular concern where lecturers propose to conduct research on student groups that they teach.
f) Make known in writing to the participants any risks arising from the research or arising from the findings.
g) Recognise the participant's entitlement to confidentiality of personal information and ensure that data are stored and reported in an anonymous and confidential manner that is also compliant with Data Protection GDPR legislation. Where appropriate, warn participants that information found in the course of the research may be disclosed to the relevant authorities if it is concerned with illegality or may cause harm to participants/others.

7.0 Allegations of Research Misconduct

DkIT expects all of its researchers to adhere to the highest standards of integrity in the conduct of their research and takes allegations of research misconduct very seriously. Any breach of ethics in the conduct of research in the School of Business and Humanities will be referred to the Institute Research Ethics Committee and the application of the DkIT Guidelines for the

Handling of Allegations of Ethical Misconduct in Research. Misconduct involving plagiarism or fabrication is dealt with using the procedures outlined in the DkIT Academic Integrity Policy.

8.0 Where Ethical Approval is Not Required

The categories of research that do not require ethical approval are listed below. • Research using exclusively secondary sources.

- ❖ Research using materials legally accessible to the public that have legal protection, e.g. record of court judgements, data archives.
- ❖ Research using materials that are publicly accessible and where there is no reasonable expectation for privacy, e.g. books, published third party interviews.
- ❖ Observations of human behaviour in public where:
  - (i) those being observed have no reasonable expectation of privacy,
  - (ii) there is no intervention on the part of the researcher nor any interaction between the researcher and those observed.

If there is any doubt, researchers should contact a member of the School Ethics Committee.

General Guidance

Research Involving Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations may include, for example, children, the elderly, people with a learning disability and those in a subordinate position to the researchers. Other groups might also be included in this category depending upon the nature or context of the research. Researchers should ensure that the use of a vulnerable population is justified and that the research cannot use a non-vulnerable population as an alternative. All other ethical principles apply equally to vulnerable populations and particular care should be exercised in anonymising all research data.

If the research involves children in a school or similar environment the school should have appropriate supervision in place to ensure that the researcher is never alone with individual children or groups of children unless appropriate explicit permissions have been obtained and vetting conducted.

Whilst all attempts to eliminate the risk of distress or upset are important in any study, procedures should be in place to deal with children or other members of a vulnerable population who become distressed or upset for any reason.

Particular care is required when participants are children. Parents need to consent explicitly to their children taking part (implicit consent by, for example, the non-return of forms, is not acceptable). The children themselves require an appropriate explanation and shall be asked to consent. The withholding of parental consent shall override a child's willingness to take part and a child's unwillingness to take part should override parental consent.

In the case of unobtrusive observational or covert research, care should be taken to ensure that the research is justified and that the benefit of undertaking the research outweighs the risk (such as invasion of privacy). Every effort should be made to gain retrospective consent and the right of a subject to refuse consent should be respected.

In all other cases,

Particular care is required when participants are children. Parents need to consent explicitly to their children taking part (implicit consent by, for example, the non-return of forms, is not acceptable). The children themselves require an appropriate explanation and shall be asked to consent. The withholding of parental consent shall override a child's willingness to take part and a child's unwillingness to take part should override parental consent.

Confidentiality
All personal data relating to participants must be anonymised in order to safeguard confidentiality.

All such personal data should be kept in accordance with the appropriate guidelines (refer to DkIT Guidelines on the Conduct of Ethical Research: https://www.dkit.ie/research-office/policies-procedures) and stored securely with any coding information stored separately.

Access to any personal data stored electronically should be restricted to the researcher(s) and their supervisors only and files should be protected. Particular care is needed in the security of laptops.

Researchers should ensure they can comply with their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Confidentiality and privacy of information may be set aside under certain circumstances. For example: The researcher must warn participants that information found in the course of the research may be disclosed to the relevant authorities if it is concerned with illegality or may cause harm to participants/others. Where there is sufficient evidence for the researcher to have serious concerns about the safety of a subject (adult or child) or about others who may be at risk because of the behaviour of that subject, then they have an obligation to inform the appropriate third party.

Risk and Risk Assessment
The physical and emotional wellbeing and safety of participants should be paramount. This should be addressed in the methods used in the study. Participants should not normally experience any undue fear, upset, distress, pain, discomfort, or risk to physical and/or mental wellbeing.

A risk assessment should be conducted to identify and evaluate any potential risk to participants and to researchers and anyone else involved in the research including the wider community. Any identified potential risk should be addressed and eliminated if possible. In some circumstances this may not be entirely possible and every effort should be made to minimise the potential risk. Procedures should be put in place (e.g. access to expert help-lines and

counsellors) to deal with any adverse event that might arise. Any adverse event encountered during the study must be reported in accordance with the relevant requirements.

Conflict of Interest
Conflict of interest might arise where, for example, a researcher is in a superior position to, or has a personal relationship with, one or more of the participants or has a close commercial interest in the outcome of the study.

Researchers must seek to minimise potential conflicts of interest by the appropriate recruitment and selection of participants and by ensuring that results are presented in an open and transparent manner and are accessible to other researchers who do not have a significant personal or commercial interest in the study.
The independence of the research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit. Any aspect of the research that might call into question its independence from outside interests, or any possible conflicts of interest, should be declared in writing from the start.

Research Conducted within the Sphere of External Organisations

Ethical principles and considerations apply equally to this type of research. All such research is subject to DkIT's Research Ethical Framework and to the research management procedures of the external organisations.

The School of Business & Humanities is committed to facilitating and promoting ethical research and expects that research conducted by those in the School will be carried out to the highest ethical standard.

Note:

The framework for the ethical conduct of research within the Institute is guided by principles of dignity, respect and care for others, honesty, integrity, accountability and leadership.

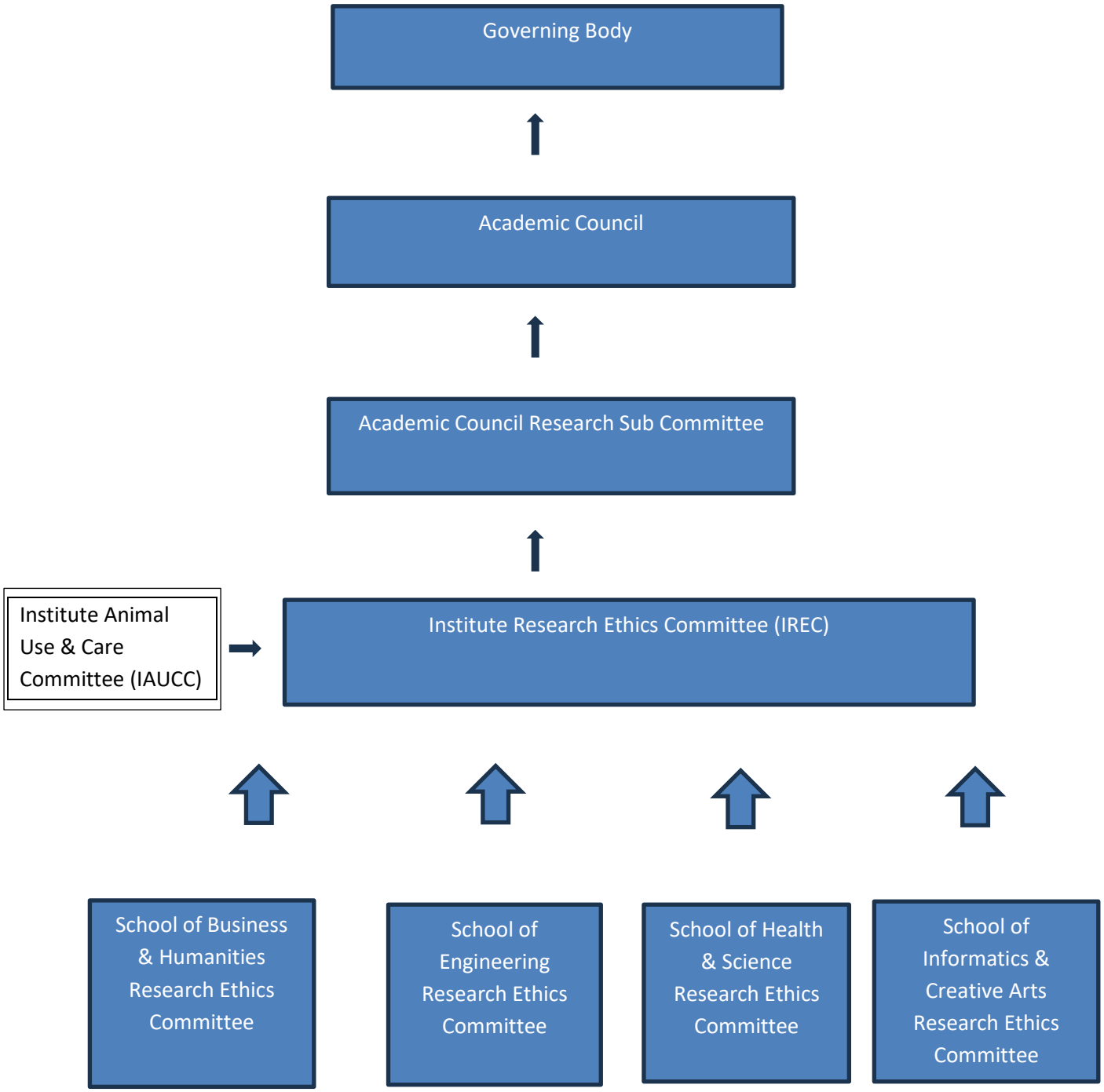
The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the:

- Conduct of the research is in accord with the above principles.
- The research is subject to appropriate ethical review and approval.

You should consult your supervisor about any issue relating to this. **The need for good ethical practice in DkIT is treated very seriously. Breaches could result in the immediate suspension of the individual project or appropriate disciplinary action.**

Students must complete the Ethical Approval checklist below and submit both it and any other relevant documents where required through their Research Supervisor/Lecturer to the relevant Head of Department. This form is set out in Appendix 1.

Ethics Structures at Dundalk Institute of Technology



Appendix 1

Ethics Committee Approval Application Form
School of Business and Humanities

1. ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Researcher/Student Name: _____

Department/Research Group/ (as applicable): _____

DkIT Programme and Stage: _____

If you are from outside DkIT please give name and address or your organisation:

_____

_____

Title of Research Project: _____

Research Supervisor: _____

Head of Department: _____

Date: _____

Type of research (tick as appropriate)			
Undergraduate Student	**Postgraduate Student**	**DkIT Staff Member**	**Researcher External to DKIT**

There is an obligation on the lead researcher to bring to the attention of the School Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by this application form.

2. APPLICATION FORM CHECKLIST

I confirm I have read and understood the School of Business & Humanities Ethics Policy **YES/NO** (delete as required)

Please complete the ethics application form below and provide additional information as attachments.

My application includes the following documentation:	**INCLUDED (mark as YES)**	**NOT APPLICABLE (mark as N/A)**
Recruitment advertisement		
Participant Information Leaflet		
Participant Informed Consent Form		
Questionnaire/Survey		
Interview/Focus Group Questions		
Debriefing material		
Evidence of approval to gain access to off-site location		
Ethical Approval from external organisations. If ethical approval from external organisations is pending give details below		
Details		

3. PROJECT DETAILS

a) Lay description (Maximum 300 words)

Please outline, in terms that any non-expert would understand, what your research project is about, including your rationale for undertaking the research and what participants will be required to do. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

b) Research Objectives and Research Design (Maximum 300 words)

Please summarise briefly the objectives of the research, and an overview of the Research Project Design including details of how the data will be analysed.

c) Research location and duration

Location(s)/Population*	
Research start date	
Research end date	
Approximate duration	

* If location/Population other than DKIT campus/population, provide details of the approval to gain access to that location/population as an appendix.

4. PARTICIPANTS

		YES	NO	N/A
Do participants fall into any of the following special groups?	**Minors (under 18 years of age)**			
	People with learning or communication difficulties			
	Patients			
	People in custody			
	People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)			
Have you given due consideration to the need for satisfactory Garda clearance?				

5. SAMPLE DETAILS

Approximate number	
Where will participants be recruited from? **How will the participants be recruited?**	
Inclusion Criteria	
Exclusion Criteria	
Will participants be remunerated, and if so in what form?	

Justification for proposed sample size and for selecting a specific gender, age, or any other group if this is done in your research.

6. RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

a) Please describe any risks to participants that may arise due to the research. Such risks could include physical stress, emotional distress, perceived coercion e.g. lecturer interviewing own

students. Detail the measures and considerations you have put in place to minimize these risks including details of supports available should participants become distressed.

b) What will you communicate to participants about any identified risks? Will any information be withheld from them about the research purpose or procedure? If so, please justify this decision.

7. INFORMED CONSENT

	YES	NO	N/A
Will you obtain <u>active</u> consent for participation?			
Will you describe the main experimental procedures to participants in advance?			
Will you advise participants that consent is an ongoing process during interviews/focus groups?			
Will you inform the participants that their participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point?			
If the research is observational, will you ask for their consent to being observed?			
With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?			
Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?			
Will the data be anonymous?			
Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation?			
Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way or will information be withheld? **If you answer yes, give details and justification for doing this below.**			

a)	**Please outline your approach to ensuring the confidentiality of data (that is, that the data will only be accessible to agreed upon parties and the safeguarding mechanisms you will put in place to achieve this.) If using Focus Groups outline the rules that will be applied. You should include details on how and where the data will be stored, and who will have access to it.**

b)	**Please outline how long the data will be retained for, if it will be destroyed and how it will be destroyed.**

8. DECLARATION

I have read and understand the DkIT guidelines for ethical practices in research and have read and understand the data protection guidelines.

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____

Date: _____

(Researcher)

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____

Date: _____

(Supervisor/Research Centre Director/Head of Department)

9. STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Supervisor/Research Centre Director/Head of Department

This project has been considered using agreed procedures and is now approved/ referred to the Ethics Committee

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____

Date: _____

Chair of Ethics Committee

This project has been considered by the Ethics Committee and ethical approval is granted.

Signed: _____ **Name:** _____

Date: _____

Please email this completed form with all supporting documentation to Susan.Murphy@DkIT.ie for consideration at the School's next School Ethics Committee meeting.