Union School of Theology Research Ethics Policy

Approved by Academic Board January 2018

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Policy due for review in September 2020

This document defines the standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at Union School of Theology (UST) including those on programmes validated by the Open University.

The content of this document has been drawn largely from the Oxford University Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure; the University of Greenwich Research Ethics Policy; and All Nations Christian College Research Ethics Policy.

This policy must be read in conjunction with [UST Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

1. CONTENTS OF POLICY

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This Research Ethics Policy prescribes standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at Union School of Theology and the consequences should non-compliance be suspected.

2.2 This policy has been written on the understanding that researchers recognise that academic integrity in research, as with any other academic undertaking, includes the requirement to avoid plagiarism, poor citation practice, collusion, cheating, contract cheating, or other similar offences which are explained in full in the UST 'Academic Misconduct Policy'. This policy therefore, primarily focuses on the ethical issues raised by research topics which might be classified as 'sensitive', involve either human participation, a potential or actual conflict of interest for the researcher and/or any other ethical issue (See section 7 below). It also sets out the procedures which should be followed to ensure due ethical consideration when any of those situations are relevant to the research being proposed.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 All research undertaken under the auspices of UST must meet the statutory requirements. Of particular relevance is the Equality Act (2010), as well as the Human Rights Act (1998), the General Data Protection Regulation, The Counter Terrorism Security Act 2015 and the requirement for Disclosure & Barring Service clearance for those working with children and provision within the existing legal framework for those working with vulnerable adults.

3.2 Where applicable, researchers should comply with any research ethics guidelines set out by their professional associations, or funding bodies. This may include ethical review

applications from those bodies and conformity with any other audited compliance regulations (e.g. NHS National Research Ethics Service review).

3.3 This policy has been developed in accordance with the following regulations, policies and procedures. This list is not exhaustive:

- Union School of Theology [BA](#), and [M. Th](#). Student Handbooks
- [Union School of Theology Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Union School of Theology Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy](#)
- [Union School of Theology Prevent Policy](#)
- [Union School of Theology Equal Opportunities Policy](#)
- [Union School of Theology Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Union School of Theology Learning Support Policy](#)
- [QAA 'UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching'](#)
- [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards](#)

4. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

4.1 Research is defined 'the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions'.[1]

4.2 Researchers are defined as all students, members of staff, including those members of UST who are conducting research overseas, and those who are not members of UST but who are conducting research on UST premises or using UST facilities. It applies to both research conducted by staff on behalf of UST, and personal research undertaken by staff and others visiting or working at UST (e.g. external Library users and other users of UST site). Finally, it also applies to students' examined work i.e. the submission and assessment of a thesis, dissertation, essay, extended arts project or other coursework that is undertaken in formal examination conditions and is a requirement for, counts towards or constitutes the work for a degree or other academic award.

4.3 Misconduct in Research:
4.3.1 Misconduct in Research is defined as "actual or attempted acts of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or deception when proposing, conducting or reporting results of research, or deliberate, dangerous, reckless or negligent deviations from accepted practices in carrying out research. It includes failure to follow established protocols if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans or the environment, and facilitating of Misconduct in Research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. It also includes the intentional or reckless unauthorised use, disclosure or removal of, or damage to, research-related property of another, including apparatus, materials, writings, data, hardware or

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[1] "Research," Oxford English Dictionary https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/research

software or any other substances or devices used in or produced by the conduct of research." [2]

4.3.2 Misconduct in Research does not include "honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to the research process". [3]

5. SUPERVISORS AND PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Supervisors are defined as those designated with the specific responsibility for supporting the researcher during the research process, as outlined in 6.2 below.

5.2 Participants are defined as those who aid the researcher in obtaining their research data by, for example, completing questionnaires, allowing themselves to be observed, and/or be interviewed etc. See 7.2 below.

6. ETHICAL RESEARCH CODE OF PRACTICE

UST works to create and maintain a culture of research that fosters and supports honesty in conducting academic research at any level. UST commits to playing its part in achieving this goal and expects researchers and supervisors do likewise.

6.1 UST therefore expects all __researchers__ to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of their research. In seeking to achieve such high standards, researchers have a responsibility to:

6.1.1 always consider and manage the real, perceived or potential ethical implications of their research, following the procedures in this document or those of other relevant authorities. Researchers therefore have an obligation to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with [UST's Code of Conduct](#) and in compliance with the law.

6.1.2 demonstrate integrity and professionalism, fairness and equity, and intellectual honesty; they should therefore be honest in proposing, conducting and reporting research; maintaining independence and impartiality in obtaining and handling data, the accuracy and reliability of research data and results and acknowledge the contributions of others when publishing and disseminating results and neither engage in misconduct nor conceal it;

6.1.3 acquaint themselves with guidance as to best research practice and standards of integrity. For example, they have an obligation to acquaint themselves with this and other relevant policies and procedures designed to ensure their research is ethically sound. They should also acquaint themselves with The UK Research Integrity Office: UKRIO Code of Practice for Research: Promoting Good Practice and Preventing Misconduct (2009);

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[2] http//:www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/cops/researchintegrity/#d.en.54059

[3] Ibid.

6.1.4 comply with ethical and legal obligations as required by all relevant statutory and regulatory authorities, including seeking ethical review and approval for research projects as appropriate.   They should ensure that any research undertaken complies with any agreements, terms and conditions relating to the research. For example, they should follow the requirements and guidance of any professional bodies in their field of research and those of the body regulating their profession if they are a member of a regulated profession.

6.1.5 as far as possible, ensure the health, safety and well-being of all those associated with the research. They have a responsibility therefore to seek to ensure the safety, dignity, wellbeing and rights of all those associated with the research, including the researcher, other participants, and risk of harm to the environment. This includes emotional and mental distress and possible damage to financial and social standing, as well as to physical harm;

6.1.6 obtain informed consent by all participants. Sufficient information should be given to participants to ensure that they understand what the research involves, procedures to ensure confidentiality and understand that they can withdraw from participating in the research at any point;

6.1.7 maintain confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents (unless explicit consent is given to the contrary);

6.1.8 ensure that research should conform to Data Protection legislation and UST (or any other relevant authority) Data Protection Policy, concerning the storage, sharing and disposal of personal data obtained during research (see section 9).

6.1.9 effectively and transparently manage any conflicts of interest, whether actual or potential, reporting these to the appropriate authority as necessary;

6.1.10 recognise their accountability to the supervisor, participants and UST for the conduct of their research;

6.1.11 report any well-founded allegations of misconduct in research, whether witnessed or suspected.

6.2 UST expects all **supervisors** to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in supporting others in their research. In seeking to achieve such high standards supervisors have a responsibility to:

6.2.1 provide adequate and timely support within the time frames required by UST; After being allocated a supervisor, BA students are entitled to a minimum of 4 hours supervision support for their dissertation. After the confirmation of the research title, MA students are entitled to 6 to 8 sessions of supervision up to a maximum of 10 hours.

6.2.2 assist the researcher to: manage the potential ethical implications of their research and to follow the procedures in this document or those of other relevant authorities;

6.2.3   offer the researcher advice on how to follow best research practice and maintain standards of integrity in all aspects of their research;

6.2.4   provide broad guidance to students in such areas as: how to focus on the proposed topic, structure and organise the research, and employ the most appropriate methodology;

6.2.5   consult other lecturers or researchers for help, as appropriate;

6.2.6   monitor the researcher's compliance with ethical and legal obligations as required by all relevant statutory and regulatory authorities and those of any relevant professional body;

6.2.7   as far as possible, ensure the health, safety and well-being of the researcher and themselves (see 6.1.5 above)

6.2.8   maintain the anonymity of information about research participants and other subjects of research e.g. organisations, divulged in the course of their supervision;

6.2.9   ensure their own records on research supervision conform to Data Protection legislation and the [UST Data Protection Policy](), concerning the storage, sharing and disposal of personal data obtained in carrying out their supervisory role;

6.2.10   declare to the Academic Dean any personal conflicts of interest that may arise, in carrying out their supervisory role;

6.2.11   be alert to, and if appropriate report, any allegations of misconduct in research, whether witnessed or suspected;

6.2.12   be accountable to their programme leader and/or the Academic Dean in carrying out their supervisory role.

6.3   UST accepts that it has an obligation to ensure that all research carried out under the scope of this policy achieves the highest standards of ethics and integrity, wherever possible and commits itself to ensuring:

6.3.1   there are sufficient learning resources (e.g. teaching, library and IT resources) to foster a positive research culture at UST;

6.3.2   that student researchers are equipped with the research skills needed, including an understanding of: research ethics, health and safety and appropriate use of IT;

6.3.3   that supervisors are equipped with the research supervision skills needed, including ethical scrutiny skills;

6.3.4   that students (and staff, when appropriate for their professional development) are suitably supervised by appropriately qualified and experienced people;

6.3.5   that it has procedures in place to ensure best research practice and standards of integrity are upheld;

6.3.6 that it has policies and procedures in place to ensure that all research undertaken under the auspices of UST meets statutory requirements. Of particular relevance for research is the Equality Act (2010), as well as the Human Rights Act (1998), General Data Protection Regulation, The Counter Terrorism Security Act 2015 and the requirement for Disclosure & Barring Service clearance for those working with children and provision within the existing legal framework for those working with vulnerable adults;

6.3.7 that policies and procedures are in place to ensure, as far as possible, the health, safety and well-being of the researchers and supervisors:

6.3.8 that it will investigate all accusations of academic misconduct fairly and in a timely manner in accordance with its '**[Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#)**';

6.3.9 that it is accountable to the Academic Board, the Board of Trustees and other relevant regulatory bodies for the effective implementation of this policy.

6.4 Handling of Data: UST expects all those who handle data in the course of their research to adhere to the following code of practice:

6.4.1   UST, supervisors and researchers should collect data accurately, efficiently and according to the agreed design of the research project, and ensure that it is stored in a secure and accessible form, in compliance with all legal, ethical or research-funder requirements, especially data protection legislation.

6.4.2 UST, supervisors and researchers should maintain the confidentiality of those providing data where undertakings have been made to third parties e.g. human participants.

6.4.3 UST, supervisors and researchers should respect and protect the intellectual property rights of all third parties.

6.4.4 The authorship of all third party data should be acknowledged and correctly cited in accordance with UST's Citation Guide (students and staff) or in the case of visitors an equivalent approved referencing system.

6.4.5 Researchers should follow UST procedures on the accurate and efficient collection of sensitive and non-sensitive data, its storage in a secure and accessible form (see section 9). Research supervisors and UST Librarian should be available to offer advice on data handling to students, staff and visitors respectively.

6.4.6 If research data is to be deleted or destroyed, either because its agreed period of retention has expired or for legal or ethical reasons, it should be done so in accordance with UST procedures (see section 9) and/or any other legal, or research funder requirements and with particular concern for confidentiality and security.

6.4.7 See section 9 for Data Handling procedures.

7 REASONS FOR SEEKING RESEARCH ETHICAL REVIEW/APPROVAL

The ethical review and approval process enables provision to be put in place to mitigate risks generated by undertaking the research. Any research involving the following (or involving any other real, perceived or potential ethical risk not listed here) requires ethical consideration and ethical approval must be sought.

7.1 Sensitive Research:

7.1.1 Sensitive research encompasses a wide variety of research topics, but there are broad research areas which would usually cause the research to be classified as 'sensitive':

- research into illegal activities, including the collection of source data, e.g. crime statistics;
- research which requires access to web sites normally prohibited on UST servers; including, but not limited to; pornography, or the sites of any of the organisations proscribed by the UK Government;
- research into extremism and radicalisation.
- research that might put the subjects of the research at personal risk if findings of the research became widely known

7.1.2 Sensitive research should be initiated and continued only if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

7.1.3 UST does not permit any illegal activities in the course of research. However it recognises that there is a fine line between what might be deemed to be illegal and what is legal but potentially unsafe. Therefore each research project which comes in this category will be carefully considered and its legality assessed before permission is given to proceed. Whilst UST endorses the principle of academic freedom and supports its researchers in undertaking ambitious, rigorous, and challenging research it has a legal obligation to monitor all research and to report illegal activity where appropriate. Conversely, in order to protect researchers from misinterpretation of intent by authorities and subsequent investigations, any researcher engaged in sensitive research must follow the procedures in section 7 so that UST can consider putting specific protocols in place to mitigate risks to all involved in such research. It also enables UST to explain to outside authorities, if required, that researchers are engaged in authorised research work.

7.1.4 Similarly, UST takes seriously its duty, under the Security and Counter Terrorism Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism on its campus (see UST 'Prevent Policy'), whether by oral, visual, written or other means. "Researchers should be aware that extremist and terrorist-related websites may be under surveillance by law enforcement agencies. Visiting such websites and/or downloading security-sensitive materials, particularly if they are terrorism-related, can be viewed by them

as prosecutable offences if it is considered that the intent is illegal."[4] Therefore, in order to protect researchers from misinterpretation of intent by authorities and subsequent investigations, the researcher must follow the procedures in section 7 so that UST can consider putting specific protocols in place to mitigate risks to all involved in such research. It also enables UST to explain to outside authorities, if required, that researchers are engaged in authorised research work.

7.2 Human participation:

7.2.1 Human participation is defined as: direct involvement through non-invasive procedures, such as interviews, questionnaires, surveys, observation; indirect involvement through access to personal information; and/or involvement requiring consent on behalf of others, such as by parents for a child participant under the age of 18 or a carer for a vulnerable adult e.g. elderly people, physically or mentally ill people, people with additional learning needs, people in care, bereaved people and people in prison.

7.2.2 The process of applying for research ethical review/approval, as outlined in section 8, allows the researcher and UST to consider whether the research has the potential to harm the dignity, rights, safety and/or wellbeing of any of the human participants including themselves or the environment.

7.2.3 Research involving human participants should be initiated and continued only if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

7.3 Conflict of Interest:

7.3.1 Conflict of interest is defined as research in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, a researcher's professional judgment in conducting or reporting research.

7.3.2 UST and researchers must comply with all legal and ethical requirements relevant to their study. They should declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest relating to research and where necessary take steps to declare and resolve them through the procedures in section 7 below.

7.3.3 Whilst studying at UST, students should not conduct any research for commercial gain.

8. PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR RESEARCH ETHICAL REVIEW/APPROVAL

8.1 Procedure for BA, GDip. and MTh. Assignments (excluding specific research papers and projects):

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http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/sites/www.open.ac.uk.research.ethics/files/files/ecms/webcontent/Terrrorism-related-policy-FINAL.pdf

8.1.1 It is the module lecturer's responsibility to identify any potential ethical considerations when setting assignments and putting out a management plan in place to mitigate risks. However, students should also be aware of any potential ethical considerations in all of their academic work.

8.1.2 At the start of every semester, module lecturers should submit their assignment questions to the external examiners together with, where appropriate, a statement declaring any potential ethical risk posed by the question and how they propose to mitigate the identified risk(s), where relevant. Action proposed in response would include, as a minimum requirement,: that each student complete a Research Ethics Approval Form by week 4 of the relevant semester and be given guidance on how to manage their research ethically and safely. This plan may also involve meeting individually with students as necessary.

8.1.3 When giving the students the approved assignment questions, the module lecturer will, where relevant, highlight on the Campus and Union Cloud VLE the ethical risks and tell students they must submit a completed Proposal Form to them by week 4. On receipt of this, the module lecturer will meet with the student (s) to check that the Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF) has satisfactorily identified the risks, outlined a proposed plan to mitigate them and confirmed that they intend to complete the *Research Participant Information Sheet/Research Informed Consent Forms*(RPIS/RICF) if their research involves human participants. (see 7.2 above)

8.1.4 When satisfied, the lecturer will grant approval by signing the REA and remove the named section of the form, (leaving just the student number visible), before returning the form to the student.

8.1.5 The lecturer will continue to support the student(s) as necessary throughout the research process, in conjunction with librarian as appropriate.

8.1.6 When submitting the assignment for marking, the signed REA and a master copy of any RPIS/RICF must also be submitted to the Programmes Administrator. In consultation with the Programme Leader, the Programmes Administrator will confirm that the correct Research ethics process has been followed. To ensure anonymity of marking, the research ethics forms will not be sent to the markers, but they will be retained with the paper after marking in case External Examiners wish to see them. The completed RICFs should be stored safely by the student and destroyed as in para. 9.5 and 9.8. The assignment itself must also be submitted electronically using the Turnitin system.

8.1.7 All sample papers sent to the external examiners for external scrutiny must be accompanied by the signed REAF.

8.2 Procedure for BA Independent Study Module and Dissertation
8.2.1 All BA students are required to engage in an Independent Study Module and Dissertation as part of their studies and to follow the policy and procedures outlined in this

document when working on them. Understanding research ethics is an important part of the study skills students need to gain. Students are expected to read, engage with and follow this guidance provided as part of the research process.

8.2.2 Students are responsible for the contents of their research and for ensuring that their research findings are presented in the format required by UST.

8.2.3 It is the student's responsibility to identify any potential ethical considerations when selecting a research topic and, during this process, they must consider how to mitigate and manage potential risks involved. The Research Proposal form contains a prompt to begin this process from the start of their project.

8.2.4 All level 5 and 6 students must complete an REAF regardless of the nature of their research and submit it with their research proposal. All other students only need to complete an REAF if required by their module tutor (level 4).

8.2.5 All students undertaking research projects will be assigned a research supervisor. This will normally be the UST lecturer in the particular field they intend to research. Level 6 dissertation students will have a supervisor assigned by the Programme Leader.

8.2.6 The purpose of research supervision is to provide guidance to students on how to focus on the proposed topic, structure and organise the research, and employ the most appropriate methodology. The designated supervisor should also advise the student on their approach to risk management, and ensure satisfactory progress is made.

8.2.7 On receipt of the student's Research Proposal and REAF, the research supervisor will meet with the student to satisfy themselves that the student has considered all potential ethical risks involved (see section 7), their plan to mitigate them is satisfactory and to confirm that the student will utilise an RPIS and RICF forms for research involving human participants. When satisfied, to ensure anonymous marking the tutor will grant approval by signing the REAF and remove the named section of the form, (leaving just the student number visible), before returning the form to the student. The REAF should be approved by the research supervisor before the research commences.

8.2.8 The research proposals and REQs must be approved by the external examiners.

8.2.9 If students make any changes to the title or topic of an already approved research proposal, they must complete and submit the 'Change of Research Title/Topic Application Form' to the Programme Leader, signed by them and their supervisor.

8.2.10 Students can expect to have a minimum of 2 hours supervisory time with their supervisor during the course of their Independent Study Module, and 4 hours for dissertation research to discuss any issues, to check their research is being conducted safely and to assess their progress and performance. If students feel that they are not receiving adequate support and supervision, they are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the Programme Leader.

8.2.11   The research supervisor must continue to support the student(s) as necessary throughout the research process; this will include monitoring the researcher's approach to risk management.

8.2.12   It is the responsibility of the student to submit a revised or additional REAF and/or RPIS/RICF, if relevant.

8.2.13   When submitting the research paper for marking, the signed, completed REAF and a master copy of any RPIS and RICF should be inserted inside the completed assignment. The Programmes Administrator in consultation with the Programme Leader will confirm the approach ethics policy has been followed, and communicate this to the marker, whilst retaining the ethics agreement forms to ensure anonymous marking is maintained. The research ethics forms will be retained with the paper after marking in case External Examiners wish to see them. The completed RICFs should be stored safely by the student and destroyed as in para. 9.5 and 9.8. The assignment itself must also be submitted electronically using the Turnitin system.

8.2.14   All students are required to fill out and submit a Research Module Evaluation Form and a Research Supervision Record at the end of their research, reflecting their experience of research orientation sessions, supervisory meetings and guidance.

8.3 Procedure for MTh Dissertation
8.3.1 All MTh students are required to engage in postgraduate level research as part of their studies and to follow the policy and procedures outlined in this document when working on MTh dissertations. Information regarding all the processes and procedures involved in the MTh Dissertation module is found in the MTh Handbook, the MTh Dissertation Module Specification, the Research Methods module teaching material, and the Dissertation Proposal Procedure document. Students are expected to read, engage with and follow all the guidance provided.

8.3.2 Students are responsible for the contents of their research and for ensuring that their research findings are presented in the format required by UST.

8.3.3 Having initially read the research ethics materials and attended the research methods module, students should discuss with their supervisor (and relevant experts, where appropriate) any potential ethical issues raised by their proposed research and complete an REAF form to indicate what they are and how to manage the risks; this is confirmed by the Supervisor.

8.3.4 The research supervisor will meet with the student to satisfy themselves, as part of the proposal process, that the REAF is satisfactory and to confirms that the student will utilise an RPIS and RICF forms for research involving human participants. The REAF should be approved by the research supervisor before the research commences.

8.3.5 The research proposals and REAFs must be approved by the external examiners.

8.3.6 The research supervisor must continue to support the student(s) as necessary throughout the research process; this will include monitoring the researcher's approach to risk management. However, the onus is upon the student to ensure that their research is carried out in accordance with ethical requirements and the terms of this policy

8.3.7 It is the responsibility of the student to submit a revised or additional REAF and/or RPIS/RICF, if relevant.

8.3.8 When submitting the dissertation for marking, the signed, completed REAF must be handed to the Programmes Administrator, and a master copy of any RPIS and RICF should form part of the appendices. The Programmes Administrator in consultation with the Programme Leader will confirm to the marker that the appropriate research ethics process has been followed.

8.3.9 All students are required to fill out and submit a Research Module Evaluation Form and a Research Supervision Record at the end of their research, reflecting their experience of research orientation sessions, supervisory meetings and guidance.

8.4 Procedure for PhD thesis
8.4.1 All PhD students are required to engage in original research as part of their studies. They should follow the Research protocols and guidance of the Free University of Amsterdam (VU) which they receive on admission to VU, and also follow the relevant policy and procedures outlined in this document.

8.4.2 Students are responsible for the contents of their research and for ensuring that their research findings are presented in the format required by the VU.

8.4.3 Students should discuss with their supervisor (and relevant experts, where appropriate) any potential ethical issues raised by their proposed research and complete a Research Ethics Enquiry Form (REAF) form to indicate what these are and how to manage the risks.

8.4.4 As part of the process of developing their research proposal, the research supervisor will meet with the student to ensure that the REAF is satisfactory. They must also confirm that the student will utilise RPIS and RICF forms for approval of any research involving human participants.

8.4.5 The research proposal and REAFs must be approved by all members of the supervisory team, and the Director of Research, before the research commences.

8.4.6 The research supervisor must continue to support the student(s) as necessary throughout the research process; this will include monitoring the researcher's approach to risk management. However, the onus is upon the student to ensure that their research is carried out in accordance with ethical requirements and the terms of this policy

8.4.7 It is the responsibility of the student to submit and have approved a revised or additional REAF and/or RPIS/RICF, if this is relevant, such as when there is a substantial change to the research.

8.5 Procedures for Staff

8.5.1 When using UST facilities and/or resources to carry out research on behalf of another institution or body, UST expects all staff members to have gone through a process of Research Ethical Review with that institution or body.

Permission to use UST facilities and/or resources for such a purpose is given on this basis and a copy of any Ethical approval form should be given to the Academic Dean.

8.5.2 In the case of research for professional development, staff members should follow the principles and procedures of this document by obtaining ethical approval from their line manager in consultation with the Academic Dean.

8.5.3 In the case of research for personal enrichment, staff members should be aware at all times of any potential ethical implications of their research and arrange appropriate supervision where necessary (see section 7 particularly above).

8.5.4 Staff must consult the Academic Dean in all cases if students are researching a sensitive issue that has the potential to be viewed as criminal. The Academic Dean will approve a suitable management and monitoring plan to ensure the protection of the researcher and UST.

8.6 Procedures for Visitors

8.6.1 When using UST facilities and/or resources to carry out research on behalf of another institution or body, UST expects all visitors to have gone through a process of Research Ethical Review with that institution or body. Permission to use UST facilities and/or resources for such a purpose is given on this basis and a copy of any ethical approval form should be given to the Academic Dean.

8.6.2 In the case of research for personal enrichment, visitors should be aware at all times of any potential ethical implications of their research and arrange appropriate supervision where necessary (see section 7 above).

8.6.3 Visitors must consult the UST Librarian if they are researching a sensitive issue that has the potential to be viewed as criminal. The Librarian will consult with the Academic Dean to

ensure a suitable management and monitoring plan has been put in place to ensure the protection of the researcher and UST.

9. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING DATA

9.1 Start of Process: Researchers should first consider how data will be gathered, analysed and managed and how and in what form relevant data will eventually be made available to others. Their research supervisor and the Academic Dean can offer advice on this.

9.2 Accuracy: Researchers should consider how to maintain the data's accuracy e.g. note any changes of address of participants. If there is any doubt about the accuracy of personal or other data then it should not be used.

9.3 Consent: Researchers must give any human participants an RPIS and ask them to sign the RPIC form to indicate consent and to assure them that their data will be kept confidential and stored securely. No participant should be included in the research unless they have their given consent on the RPIC

9.4 Individual Rights: When preparing reports or appending notes to official documents, bear in mind that individuals have the right to see all personal data and could therefore read any 'informal' comments made about them. Also be aware that this includes e-mails containing personal data and so the same caution should be used when sending e-mails.

9.5 Sensitive data and Security: Any data, files or other digital or electronic items including audio or video material used or produced in the course of gathering sensitive material must be stored appropriately. Researchers must keep all personal data as securely as possible (e.g. in lockable filing cabinets or in rooms that can be locked when unoccupied). They should not leave records containing personal data unattended in offices or areas accessible to the members of the public. They should ensure that personal data is not displayed on computer screens visible to passers-by. They should be aware that these security considerations also apply to records taken away from UST e.g. on a laptop to another destination. They should also bear in mind that e-mail is not necessarily confidential or secure so should not be used for potentially sensitive communications.

The Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 outlaw the dissemination of terrorist publications if the individual concerned has the intention to encourage or induce others. Therefore, particular care must be taken to look after research data and materials that fall into this category and any other potentially criminally sensitive material appropriately (see 7.1), and dissemination should be avoided wherever possible. Physical materials such as manuals, reports or other hard copy documents should be scanned and uploaded to a secure area, and the original hard copy then destroyed. If this is not possible then the material should be kept in a locked filing cabinet or similar.[5]

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[5] Ibid

9.6 Review files: Researchers should only create and retain personal data where absolutely necessary. They should securely dispose of or delete any personal data that is out of date, irrelevant or no longer required. It is good practice to hold regular reviews of files and discard unnecessary or obsolete data systematically. (See 1.7).

9.7 Retention: Subject to any legal, ethical or other requirements, data should be kept intact for any legally specified period and otherwise for the following length of time from the end of the project: 1 year for levels 4 and 5; 2 years for level 6; 3 years for MTh. students.

9.8 Disposal of records: When discarding paper records that contain personal data, they should be treated confidentially (i.e. shred such files rather than disposing of them as waste paper). Similarly, any unnecessary or out-of-date electronic records should be deleted. Computers should not be given away or sold unless UST's ICT services have ensured that all information stored on it has been removed or deleted.

9.9 Third Parties: Personal data should never be revealed to third parties without the consent of the individual concerned or other reasonable justification. This includes parents, guardians, relatives and friends of the data subject who have no right to access information without the data subject's consent. Personal data can only be legitimately disclosed to third parties for purposes connected with a student's studies and to meet statutory or legal requirements, but only where UST is satisfied regarding the enquirers' identity and the legitimacy of the request. Researchers should also maintain confidentiality where undertakings have been made to other third parties, organisations or to protect intellectual property rights.

9.10 Worldwide Transfer: Researchers must always obtain specific consent from the individual's concerned before placing information about them on the Internet (apart from basic office contact details) and before sending any personal data outside the European Union, Iceland, Lichtenstein or Norway.[6]

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

10.1 UST will own the Intellectual Property Rights arising from research undertaken by registered students, Staff in the course of their employment (or for Staff who are not employees, in the course of their duties for UST), unless a prior contractual arrangement assigns such rights to a Sponsor or Funder. In the case of external research collaborators, the collaboration agreement will set out the ownership of Intellectual Property Rights.

10.2 UST does not in practice assert its ownership of the copyright in respect of material such as books, journal articles, and musical compositions where there is no substantial commercial interest. However, UST retains its right to use and reproduce such materials for its educational and research purposes, including hosting in an online repository, whilst recognising the author's moral rights to be identified as the author or creator of the work.

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[6] Section 9 is taken almost completely from http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/10_rules/

11. MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH

11.1 Failure to comply with the Ethical Research Code of Practice (section 5) may give rise to an allegation of Misconduct in Research (see para. 5.3).

11.2 Suspicions reported in confidence and in good faith will not lead to disciplinary proceedings against the person making the complaint. In the event, however, of a frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious allegation the complainant may be liable for disciplinary investigation and action.

11.3 Prior to making any formal allegation, sources of advice and support for:

11.3.1. Students, include:

- Research Supervisors
- Personal Tutors
- Module Tutors
- Programme Leaders
- Academic Dean

11.3.2 Members of staff, include:

- Line Manager
- Academic Dean

11.3.3 Visitors, include:

- Research supervisors
- Researchers' own research support network
- UST Librarian

11.4 Depending on the party being accused of Misconduct in Research, the following procedures will be followed:

11.4.1 UST Academic Misconduct policy and procedure will be used for students of UST.

11.4.2 The Staff Disciplinary procedure will be used for staff members

11.4.3 In the case of Visitors, the Academic Dean or his representative will contact the visitor's supervisor and/or the university which will be validating their research, so that they can initiate their own investigation. UST will facilitate but not usually lead such an investigation unless mutually agreed by all parties, in which case the procedure to be used will be agreed at that time.

11.5 When an investigation has taken place using a UST procedure, the basis for reaching a conclusion that an individual is responsible for the Misconduct in Research relies on a judgement that there was an intention to commit Misconduct in Research and/or recklessness in the conduct of any aspect of a research project.

12. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

12.1 Complaints: Should a person who has been accused of academic misconduct, feel they have been treated unfairly, they should initially discuss this with the relevant person concerned, as follows:

- Students and UST personnel should follow procedures in the '**UST Complaints Policy'** by discussing the situation informally before, should they feel the matter to still be unsatisfactory, taking more formal action according to that policy and procedure document.
- All other persons covered by this Code, should discuss the matter initially with the member of UST personnel who has been dealing with the accusation. Should they feel the matter still to be unsatisfactory, may take more formal action by making a formal complaint by using the '**Complaints Policy'** which is available from UST Academic Registrar.

12.2 Appeals: Should a person who has been investigated by UST for an accusation of academic misconduct, feel the outcome of the investigation was unreasonable, they should consult the policy and procedural document which was used to investigate their case. This will contain the grounds and procedure for appeal.

13. SANCTIONS

13.1 If proven, Misconduct in Research will usually be a ground for disciplinary action. Sanctions will be outlined in the procedure used for the investigation.

13.2 Any investigation panel may also determine:

i. to notify other institutions, which have a legitimate interest in the outcome of the procedure. Such notification could include:
- Notifying other third parties who are deemed to have a legitimate interest in the outcome of the proceedings, including, for example the co-authors of the Respondent in a manuscript subject to an allegation of Misconduct in Research.
- Notifying the publisher of a manuscript that was subject to an allegation of Misconduct in Research in order that this can be retracted or corrected.
- Notifying any funding body which has supported the research in question.
- Notifying UST Prevent Lead of any concerns in relation to vulnerable adults being drawn into reportable activity according to the Security and Counter Terrorism Act 2015. The Academic Registrar will follow UST procedures as outlined in UST Prevent Policy and, where appropriate, the police and/or other authorities will also be informed.
- Notifying any regulatory or other agencies as required by law.
- Notifying any other organisation involved in the research (including other employing organisations).

ii.   to curtail or refuse the individual's continued use of UST's premises and facilities.

iii.   to pursue, if applicable, the recovery of any costs for damage etc incurred to UST property.

iv.   to consider whether to recommend that UST reviews training and/or supervisory procedures for research.

14. RESPONSIBILITIES, POLICY APPROVAL AND REVIEW

14.1 This document, as well as all other policy, procedure and guidance documents relating to those studying at Union School of Theology, will be available to all, monitored regularly and reviewed and evaluated periodically.

14.2 The Provost, Academic Dean and the Programme Leaders have overall responsibility for the Research Ethics Policy, including its approval and regular review.

15. POLICY COMMUNICATION

15.1 This document, and all other policy and procedure documents mentioned in this policy, can be found in the full UST 'Handbook of Policies and Procedures' which is located in the student area of the UST Cloud VLE and on the UST website: www.ust.ac.uk

15.2 Every effort will be made to respond to any request to provide this policy in a different format.

15.3 This policy will be included in staff and student induction.

16. APPENDICES

Dissertation / Independent Study Paper Proposal Form
Application for Change of Research Title/Topic
Research: Ethics Approval Form
Research Participant Information Sheet
Research Informed Consent Form

APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF TITLE/TOPIC OF RESEARCH PROJECT, DISSERTATION, INDEPENDENT STUDY MODULE

Please ask your Supervisor(s) to endorse your application and then submit this form to the Programme Leader.

Section A: To be completed by student	
Name:	Student Code:
Programme:(e.g. BA/MTh)	Mode of Study: FT/PT
Date of Registration:	E-mail:
Exact title already approved (Block Capitals):	
Proposed new title (Block Capitals):	
Student's reason for the proposed change:	
This proposed change will involve completion of ethics documentation YES/NO	

Student's signature:	Date:

Section B: To be completed by Supervisor(s)

Supervisor's comments concerning change:

Supervisor's name and signature: Date:

Office Use Only

Comments:

Signature of the Undergraduate Programme Leader:

Date:

RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM (REAF)

Project title	
Student number	
Supervisor	
Intended start date of data collection	

1. **Does this project need the approval of any other body (e.g. church, organisation, institution?**

   If you have gained ethics approval elsewhere, please detail it here:

2. **Research methods to be used** (tick all that apply)

   ☐ Interviews   ☐ Literature review
   ☐ Focus groups
   ☐ Questionnaire
   ☐ Observation
   ☐ Other

3. **Research participants**

   Does the research involve human participants?

   ☐ Yes, as a primary source of data *(e.g. through interviews)*
   ☐ Yes, as a secondary source of data (e.g. using existing data sets)
   ☐ No *Please explain_____*

   If the research involves human participants, who are they? (tick all that apply)

   ☐ Adults or Other *please describe them below*

   ☐ Early years/pre-school*

   ☐ School-aged children*

   ☐ Young people aged 17-18*

   ☐ Persons incapable of making an informed decision for themselves*

   *If yes, what special arrangements are you planning to make to protect them e.g. will you need obtain special permissions/have others present etc?

Are there any potential risks to the researchers in this study? ☐

If YES, please answer the following questions:

- What are the potential risks?

- What measurers have been put in place to address these risks?

5. Specific ethical issues

(Outline the main ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how they will be addressed)

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6. Storage and Security of Data

Will the investigation include the use of any of the following:

- **Observation of Participants** ☐
- **Audio Recording** ☐
- **Video Recording** ☐

If Yes, please provide details of how the recording/transcripts will be stored, where specifically the recording will be stored, when the recordings will be destroyed and how confidentiality will be ensured?

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7. Data Protection

- What steps will be taken to safeguard anonymity of participants/confidentiality and security
of personal data and to ensure participant's data is not kept any longer than necessary?

Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this research			
Signed		Date	

Approved ☐

☐

Referred back to applicant

Signature of Approver: ……………………………………………… **(NB remove name below)**

Name of Student :   ……………………………………… **(to be removed when signed by approver)**

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Insert Name of Student: Programme:

The purpose of the study is to:

The research is being carried out by [Name of Student] in order to provide information that will be of use to _____

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes! After you have read this information and asked any questions you will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

How long will it take?

Is there anything I need to do before the sessions?

Is there anything I need to bring with me?

Who should I send questionnaires back to?

Please return any questionnaires (if applicable) to

What will I be asked to do?

What personal information will be required from me?

Are there any risks in participating?

No risks in participating in this study have been identified by UST Ethics Committee

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be included in any documentation. The name of any institution or organisation that you represent will only be used with your permission. All information that you supply will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your experiences will only be referred to in the publication of the research with your consent.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Information supplied in the course of the session will be used by the researcher to

The completed study will be submitted to UST as per the requirements of the [Name of Programme/Qualification]

If I have some more questions who should I contact?

Name of student

Address

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

Please contact
 Academic Dean
Union School of Theology
Bryntirion House
Bridgend

CF31 4 DX

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by Union School of Theology.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study.

Your name _____

Your signature _____

Signature of investigator _____

UNION SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

YSGOL DIWINYDDIAETH UNDEB

B.A. Independent Study Proposal Form

Student Name: Student Number:

Summarise your dissertation proposal in no more than 500 words, excluding bibliography, under the headings below.

1. Proposed Title

2. Research Questions

3. Rationale for Project

4. Strategy or Methodology

5. Ethical Declaration

Tick the Appropriate Boxes:

[ ] I Declare That I Have Read The UST Research Ethics Policy And The UST Data Protection Policy

[ ] I Declare That There Are No Issues Requiring Ethical Approval (see attached REAF)

[ ] The Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF) Has Been Submitted, Along With Supporting Documentation

6. Tentative Outline (Main Section/Subsections)

7. Working Bibliography of *Key* Sources (Maximum of 10 items)

Student Signature:…………………………….   Date:…………………..

Supervisor's Approval:…………………………..   Date:…………………..

[The Supervisor also has to approve the attached REAF]

UNION SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

YSGOL DIWINYDDIAETH UNDEB

Dissertation Proposal Form

Student Name: Student Number:

Programme:

Summarise your dissertation proposal in no more than 1250 words, excluding bibliography, under the headings below.

(Note: For the purposes of this form you do not need to use footnotes.)

1. Proposed Title

2. Purpose/Aims

3. Rationale for Project

4. Methodology and Methods Including Questions/Issues to be Explored

5. Ethical Declaration

Tick the Appropriate Boxes:

[ ] I Declare That I Have Read The UST Research Ethics Policy And The UST Data Protection Policy

[ ] I Declare That There Are No Issues Requiring Ethical Approval (see attached REAF)

[ ] The Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF) Has Been Submitted, Along With Supporting Documentation

6. Literature Review

7. Tentative Outline (Main Section/Subsections; Chapter Titles)

8. Working Bibliography of A Sample of *Key* Sources (Maximum of 15 items)

Student Signature:…………………………….   Date:…………………..

Supervisor's Approval:…………………………..   Date:…………………..

[The Supervisor also has to approve the attached REAF.]