

MPA Research Reports Ethics Submissions Guide

You should read this document if you are an MPA student who has not yet completed his/her Research Report work AND anticipates doing work for the report that requires ethics review; OR if you are a supervisor of such a student.

Do I require ethics review?

MPA students require ethics review for their Research Report work IF the work involves surveys, focus groups, or interviews that are more than just informational (ie, you are asking about recollections and opinions, rather than just collecting factual information / data).

If your work does **not** involve any of the above (for example, if you're only using documents, written reports, media articles, and/or previously gathered statistical data), you do not need ethics clearance, and you do not need to read the rest of this Guide.

Any MPA Research Report work that requires ethics clearance must go through the University-wide Research Ethics approval process. In order to prepare for ethics review, you need to first work out the details of your research design for interviews or surveys, including the kinds of people/organizations that you will reach out to, and what you plan to ask them.

The rest of this Guide provides information for both students and supervisors on the logistics of the ethics review process. It also provides links or references to documents that can help you to develop the substance and wording of your ethics submission.

Timeline

The vast majority of our students will qualify for a “delegated” ethics review process (intended for research that does not involve work with vulnerable populations). There is no University deadline for ethics submissions to the delegated process. However, the process can take three weeks or more total (assuming that your initial submission is returned to you with requirements for revision, which most are), so please budget sufficient time to complete it.

I'm a supervisor. What do I need to do?

1. The supervisor helps the student to decide whether ethics review is necessary; if it is, the supervisor helps the student as necessary through the process of designing the research strategy and developing the documents (eg., Letter of Information; consent form; survey).
2. In addition, for ethics purposes, **ONLY** the supervisor can be “Principal Investigator” (PI) on student projects. What does this mean? It means two basic things:
 - a. The supervisor must have, or establish, a personal profile on ROMEO, the on-line ethics submission system. If you are a supervisor who doesn't have a profile on ROMEO, go to this page to make one (it only takes a couple of minutes):

http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/romeo/romeo_new_investigator_form.html

- b. The student will fill out the ethics submission form and attach necessary documents (see below). However, the supervisor must be the one to **submit** the ethics documentation, both in initial form, and once any revisions requested by the Office of Research Ethics have been made.

How does this work? The student will list the supervisor as PI on the student's project. The student will inform the supervisor when the ethics documents are ready for submission; the supervisor will then log in to the ROMEO system, review the documents as he/she deems necessary, and press the "submit" button. Same process if the student is required to make any revisions by the Office of Research Ethics.

I'm a student. What do I need to do?

1. Determine whether or not your research will require ethics review.
2. If you require ethics review, establish a ROMEO account. This is quick. Go here:
http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/romeo/romeo_new_investigator_form.html
Within a day or so of submitting the form, you will receive an email to your UWO account with your login information.
3. Log in to the ROMEO system and click on the "Apply New" button at the top right. Familiarize yourself with the various tabs in the form and the information that you will be required to provide. A sample blank form (with all tabs rolled into one document) is available on the LGP website under the title "Ethics Review Submission – All Questions". It looks very long, but NOTE that many of the questions are optional, and others may not be relevant for you. This is why you should look at the form on-line as well – *the only mandatory questions are the ones with red asterisks beside them.*
4. Fill in the form. Note that you can save, exit, and then re-open the form later (by logging in to ROMEO and clicking "edit" on your application), so you don't need to do it all at once. IMPORTANT: List your supervisor as Principal Investigator for the project. List yourself as "Research Support Staff". Yes, it's strange, but apparently this is only way that feedback on the proposal will be e-mailed directly to you.
5. Attach a Letter of Information (LOI) and Consent Form and – if relevant – your survey or questionnaire. If you're using a survey or questionnaire, you don't need a separate written consent form – you'll just note in your LOI that completion of the survey/questionnaire implies consent. If you're doing interviews, you will need to develop a consent form and bring it to the interview to be signed. You can find guidelines and a template for the LOI and Consent Form here (under the "Consent Documentation" tab):

http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/nonmedical_reb/NMREB_Templates.html

6. Let your supervisor know that your ethics submission is ready to send in; your supervisor will log in to ROME0, review the submission, and press the “submit” button.
7. Within a week or so, you should receive an email notification that your submission has been reviewed. Log back in to ROME0 and see whether it has been approved as-is, or whether you need to make any revisions. If you need to make revisions, the process for doing so is described pretty clearly and succinctly on pp. 6-7 of the following document:
http://www.uwo.ca/research/_docs/ethics/Non-Medica_REB_Researcher_Guideline_final_July%2023_2013.pdf
(This document also describes the earlier stages in the process in greater detail, so you can refer to it if this guide leaves questions unanswered).
8. Assuming you’ve made acceptable revisions, you should receive an e-mail notifying you that you have ethics approval within a few days. You’re good to do your research!

Further resources:

The LGP webpage contains a sample approved Ethics Protocol for a 2016 MPA Research Report project by (with all supporting documents). You will find this under the title “Student Example”. You can review this for ideas on wording. Note, however, that every project is different so your own wording will, of course, need to be adapted for your particular methods and purposes.