Ethics clearance application and approval

Ethics clearance is required prior to commencement of data collection for the following:
- Staff research
- Student research

Ethics clearance is provided by the **Departmental Ethics Committee** for:
- Undergraduate research projects
- Honours research
- Coursework Masters research*

The above applications are submitted in hard copy format.

* Some departments prefer that ethics clearance applications for their coursework Masters students are also processed via the online system used for research Masters.

Ethics clearance is provided by the **Faculty Ethics Committee** for:
- Research Masters
- Doctoral research
- Staff research

The above applications are processed on UP's online ethics application system.

Procedure for applications on the online system

1. The applicant completes the application, uploads the required supporting documents and then submits the application.

2. The application is routed to the supervisor (student applicant) and the departmental member of the Faculty Ethics Committee, who check that the application and supporting documents are correct and complete. If incomplete, the application is returned to the applicant for correction and resubmission.

3. When approved in step 2 above, the application is routed to the Head of Department who again checks it. The HOD also has the option of referring it back to the applicant for correction.

4. When approved by the HOD, the application is routed to the Faculty Ethics Administrator, who assigns and routes it to one of the Faculty Ethics Committee's members for a full review.

5. After review, the application is routed back to the Ethics Administrator. Depending on the reviewer's feedback, one of the following options is possible:
   - If the reviewer has identified any problems with the application, the Ethics Administrator routes it back to the applicant for correction and resubmission. The process then restarts from step 1 above.
   - If the reviewer finds the application acceptable, he/she recommends that the application can be approved, or – if anything else is required – conditionally approved. The Ethics Administrator captures the recommendation on the system,

after which it is routed to the chairperson of the Faculty Ethics Committee for final approval.

6. During the monthly meeting of the Committee, all the applications received since the last meeting are discussed and a final decision is taken.

7. The Committee chair captures the final decision on the system:
   - **Approved:** A system-generated approval letter is mailed to the applicant.
   - **Conditionally approved:** A system-generated conditional approval letter, indicating the reason for conditional approval, is mailed to the applicant. The applicant may not commence data collection until the condition has been met. The conditional approval usually relates to an outstanding document, e.g. a letter from a company granting permission for its employees to participate in a survey. When the applicant uploads the required document to the application, it is routed directly to the Ethics Administrator. If he/she is satisfied that the condition has been met, final approval is captured on the system and a system-generated final approval letter is mailed to the applicant.
   - **Rejected:** The system generates a letter indicating that the application has been rejected, indicating reasons for the decision.

The following diagram summarises the ethics application and approval flow process: