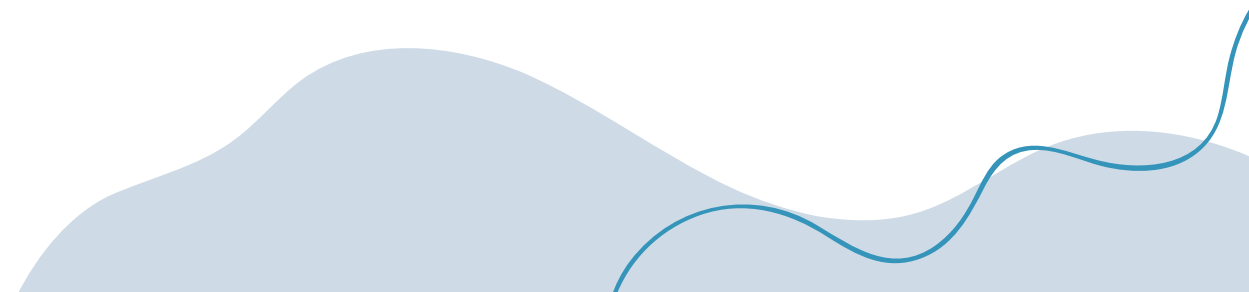


Research Ethics

Dr Katie Sullivan



What are research ethics?

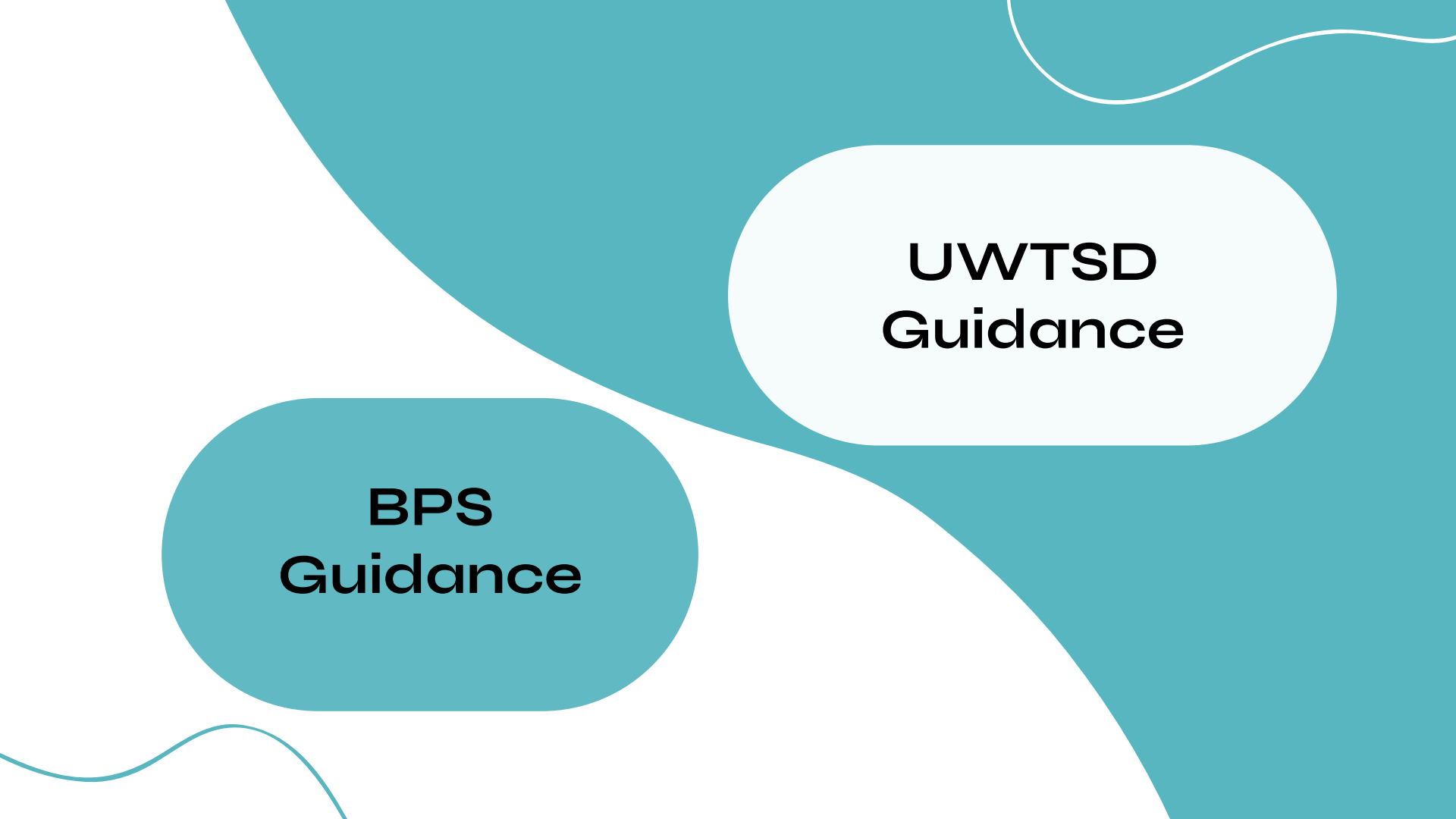


“A set of principles and standards that guide psychologists to identify, analyse, and address the ethical issues that arise throughout the design, conduct, analysis, and dissemination of research involving human participants”

(BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2021)



The
British
Psychological
Society

The image features a teal background with white wavy lines. Two rounded rectangles are positioned diagonally. The top-right rectangle is white with black text, and the bottom-left rectangle is teal with white text.

**UWTSD
Guidance**

**BPS
Guidance**

The Core BPS Principles?

Respect for
Persons

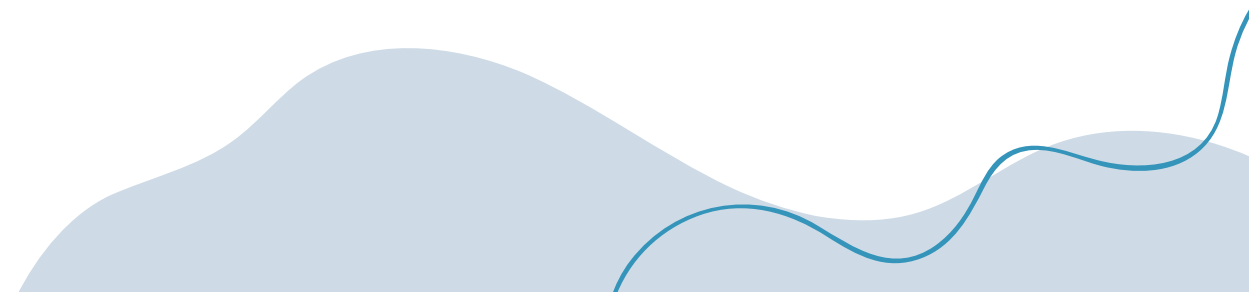
Beneficence and
Non-Maleficence

Justice

Integrity



Why Research Ethics Is So Important?



Protecting Participants

- Psychological harm (distress, anxiety, embarrassment)
- Physical harm
- Social or reputational harm
- Loss of privacy or confidentiality

Protecting Researchers

Ethical practice:

- Protects students from complaints or misconduct allegations
- Supports professionalism and good decision-making
- Provides a framework when unexpected issues arise

Protecting the Integrity of Research

Unethical research leads to:

- Invalid or biased data
- Loss of public trust
- Research that cannot be published or used

Professional & Institutional Responsibility

Ethics is:

- A requirement of professional bodies (e.g., BPS)
- A requirement of the university
- A requirement for future postgraduate study or applied work



Ethics Is Not “Just an Ethics Form”

**Ethical thinking should
happen at every stage of
the research process**



Research Idea Stage

- Is this a suitable topic for undergraduate research?
- Who might be affected by this research?
- Am I researching a potentially vulnerable group?
- Is the research necessary and justified?

Study Design & Methods

- Are my methods appropriate and proportionate?
- Could the procedure cause distress or discomfort?
- Is any deception involved, and is it justified?
- Are power dynamics an issue (e.g., students, employees)?

Recruitment and Sampling

- How are participants recruited?
- Is participation genuinely voluntary?
- Are there risks of coercion or pressure?
- Are incentives appropriate?.

Data Collection

- Informed consent
- Right to withdraw
- Privacy and confidentiality during participation
- Managing unexpected distress or disclosures

Data Storage & Analysis

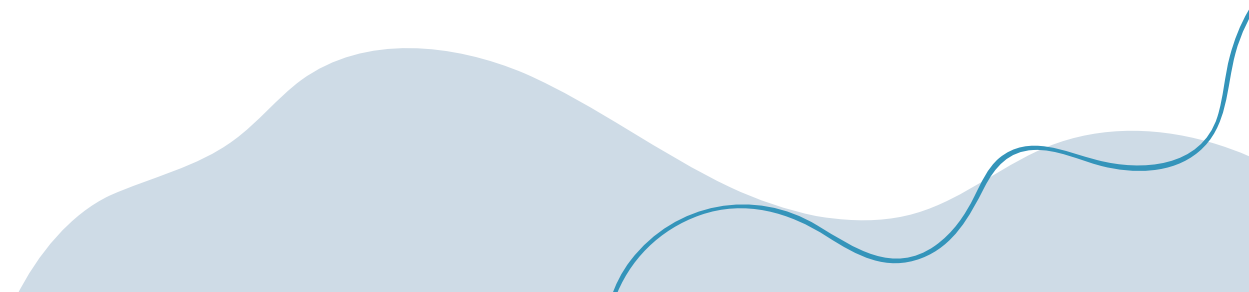
- Anonymisation or pseudonymisation
- Secure data storage
- GDPR and data protection responsibilities
- Who has access to the data?

Dissemination & Reporting

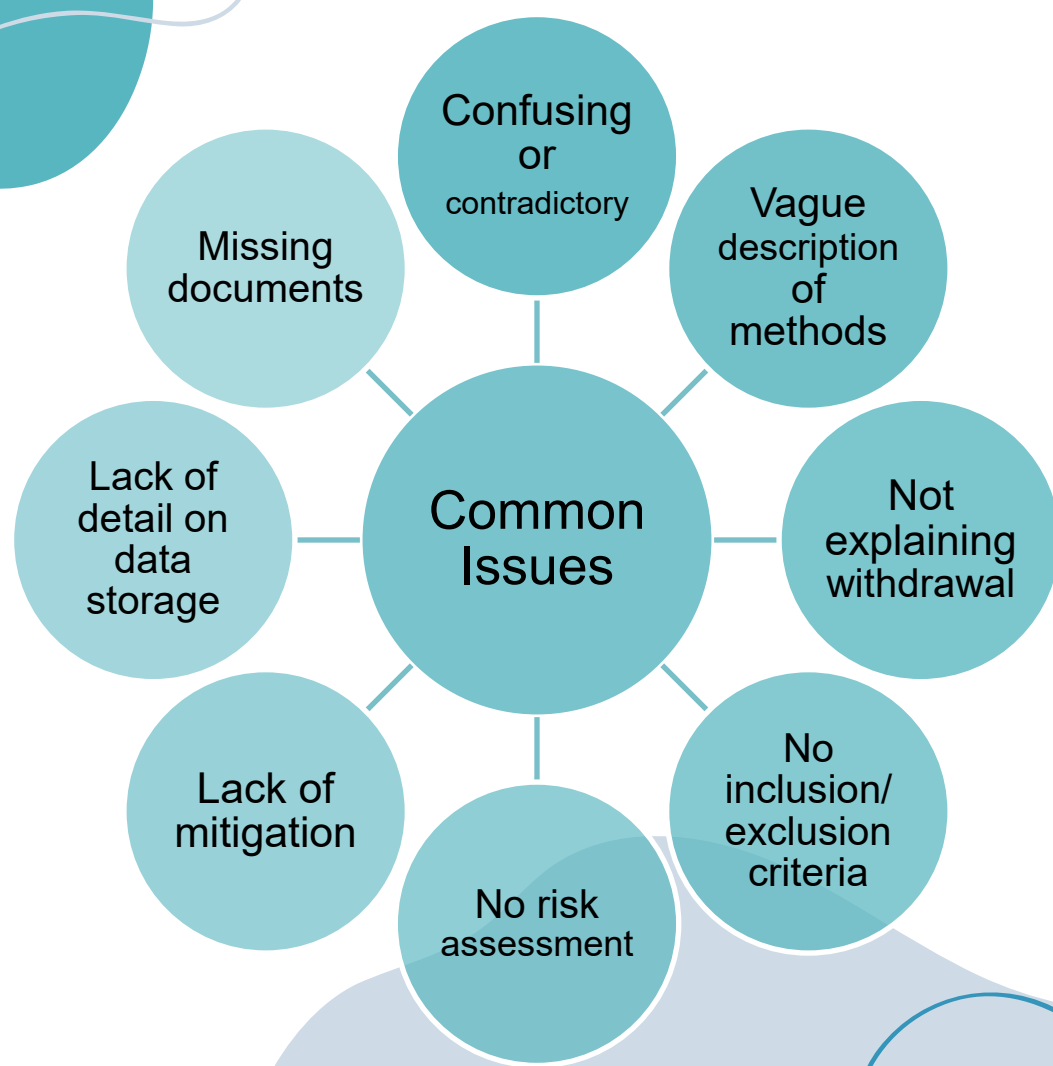
- Honest reporting of findings
- Avoiding fabrication or falsification
- Respectful language when discussing groups
- Responsible use of quotations and examples



The Ethics Form

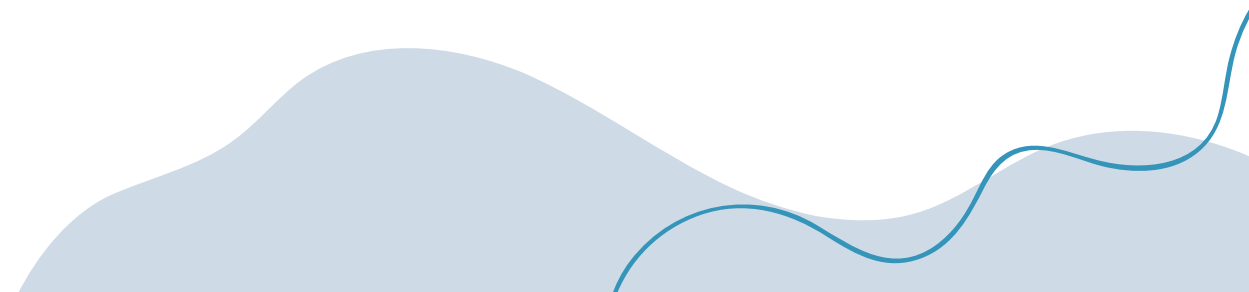








The School Research Ethics Committee



Responsibilities

Your Responsibility

- Writing the ethics form and completing ALL sections
- Making any changes after feedback from the supervisor
- Creating/developing all materials
- Identifying risks and implementing risk mitigation
- Adhering to the ethical guidelines and data protection protocols
- Submitting draft and final version on time

Supervisors Responsibility

- Providing academic and ethical guidance
- Reviewing drafts before submission
- Ensuring accuracy
- Signing off minor amendments (after SREC outcome)

SREC Process

Discuss your idea with your supervisor and check feasibility, method, risks, and ethical considerations.

Draft the Ethics form and any other documents as required

Supervisor reviews form and documents, and they help you refine unclear, risky, or incomplete areas.

Your Ethics Form will either be signed off by you supervisor, or sent back to you for further changes

Submit to the ethics portal to be reviewed by member of the SREC

SREC review your form and you receive your outcome

Possible Outcomes

1. Approved

Your application meets ethical requirements, and you can begin data collection immediately (with final agreement for supervisor)

2. Conditional Approval: Supervisor Sign-Off

Your form is almost correct. Only very small changes are needed, and your supervisor can confirm these without resubmission.

3. Conditional Approval: Chair's Action

Your application requires substantive revisions (but not enough to require a full resubmission). Once your supervisor has signed off on any changes, your form must be sent back to the Ethics Committee Chair to review your changes.

4. Resubmit

There are significant issues with the form, and the ethics panel must see a revised application at the next scheduled meeting.

5. Not Approved/Reject

The project has fundamental ethical issues and cannot proceed in its current form. A new project, or major redesign, will be required.



**Once you receive
ethical approval,
you can start
collecting data**



Key Points

Ethics starts
before the
ethics form

Ethics review
is not about
catching you
out, it is about
improving
research.

Ethics
approval is a
normal and
supportive
part of
research

Good ethics
strengthens
research
quality

Ethical
challenges are
opportunities
for reflection,
not failure

Ethical
thinking
continues
throughout the
entire project