

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the “principal researcher”.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Kumail abbas
2	Student Number:	2436863
3	Email address:	2436863@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
5	Supervisor:	Alireza Nazarian

SECTION B: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	UWTSD guidance on the use of generative AI in academic work	☒
4		☐

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	The Influence of Sustainable Sourcing and Environmental Ethics on Consumer Trust and Brand Reputation in the UK Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Industry: An Extended Literature Review		
2	Proposed start date:	01/08/2026	Proposed end date:	02/09/2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words in each section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the three points below: • Purpose of Research Activity • Proposed Research Question • Aims of Research Activity • Objectives of Research Activity			

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	Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain • <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> • <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>
3	Purpose of Research Activity The proposed research will examine how sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics shape consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. Existing research indicates that consumers increasingly evaluate brands not only by price and quality, but also by the credibility of their sourcing, environmental conduct and sustainability communication. However, the evidence is fragmented across marketing, business ethics and supply-chain research, and the four central concepts are often examined separately. This extended literature review will therefore synthesise recent peer-reviewed evidence to clarify the relationships among sustainable sourcing, environmental ethics, consumer trust and brand reputation. It will also examine conditions that may strengthen or weaken these relationships, including transparency, certification, perceived authenticity and greenwashing. The research will add to the body of knowledge by integrating findings that are currently dispersed across disciplines and by developing a coherent conceptual account relevant to the UK FMCG context. This is an important area because FMCG firms operate in highly visible and competitive markets where questionable environmental claims or supply-chain practices can quickly damage consumer confidence and corporate reputation. The study will use published academic literature only and will not involve human participants or primary data. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question How do sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK fast-moving consumer goods industry, according to the existing academic literature? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity Number your aims and link them to your objectives Aim 1 (linked to Objectives 1-5): To critically synthesise existing academic evidence on how sustainable sourcing and environmental ethics influence consumer trust and brand reputation in the UK FMCG industry. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To critically review the principal theories and concepts connecting sustainable sourcing, environmental ethics, consumer trust and brand reputation. 2. To examine evidence concerning the influence of sustainable sourcing on consumer trust in the UK FMCG industry. 3. To assess how corporate environmental ethics shape brand reputation and consumer perceptions in the UK FMCG industry. 4. To identify contextual factors, including transparency, certification, authenticity and greenwashing, that strengthen or weaken these relationships. 5. To develop evidence-based theoretical and managerial implications and identify priorities for future research. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed data collection methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity to collect data, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	<i>This should describe how you intend to collect data. It should not include a discussion of the theoretical basis for your data collection methods. Please note, that if you intend to collect any audio/video recordings of interviews with participants then these will be classified as Personal Data under GDPR/DPA2018. If you intend to use these then note this in section H.</i>

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	The research will collect secondary data only through a semi-systematic extended literature review. Searches will be undertaken in Scopus, Web of Science, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight. Google Scholar will be used as a supplementary tool to identify relevant studies and trace citations. Search strings will combine terms such as “sustainable sourcing”, “ethical sourcing”, “responsible sourcing”, “environmental ethics”, “environmental responsibility”, “consumer trust”, “brand trust”, “brand reputation”, “corporate reputation”, “FMCG”, “consumer goods”, “United Kingdom” and “UK”, using the Boolean operators AND and OR. The principal publication period will be 2015-2026, although earlier foundational studies may be included where they are necessary to explain established theories or concepts. Search results will be recorded in a reference-management file and duplicate records will be removed. Titles and abstracts will first be screened against predefined eligibility criteria, followed by full-text assessment. Included sources will principally comprise peer-reviewed English-language journal articles and selected high-quality academic books or chapters that directly address the research question. Priority will be given to UK-focused studies; international FMCG studies will be retained where they provide directly transferable evidence or address gaps in the UK literature. Non-academic websites, news reports, opinion pieces, conference abstracts without full papers, duplicate records and studies unrelated to the relevant concepts or industry context will be excluded. The selection process will be documented through a PRISMA-style flow diagram. The final studies will be entered into a structured data-extraction table recording citation details, country, sector, theoretical basis, methodology, sample or data source, principal findings and stated limitations. Study quality will be assessed using source quality, methodological transparency, robustness, relevance to the research question and theoretical contribution. The evidence will then be analysed through thematic analysis and narrative synthesis to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, contextual differences and research gaps. No questionnaires, interviews, observations, confidential organisational records, personal data or special-category data will be collected. (this box should expand as you type)
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SECTION D: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒

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	Details of any other primary data collection method: No primary data will be collected. The dissertation is an extended literature review based solely on published academic sources. (this box should expand as you type)		
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If you have ticked NO to every question then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and you may skip section E and continue to section F.

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION E: Intended Participants

Who are the intended participants:		YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☐	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☐
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☐
5	Prisoners?	☐	☐
6	Young offenders?	☐	☐
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☐
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☐
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☐
	Details of any other participant groups: Complete this only if your participants cannot give consent. This includes animals N/A - the research will not involve human or animal participants. (this box should expand as you type)		

Participant numbers and source		
Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?		
10	How many participants are expected?	Ballpark figures are fine but make sure that you explain how you will identify and contact your participants. 0. No participants will be recruited. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	N/A - secondary literature review only. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	N/A - no participants will be identified or contacted. (this box should expand as you type)

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A

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13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☐	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☐	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☐	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☐	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
You should be able to tick YES for all of these questions. If not, then explain why not in this box. N/A - no participants are involved in the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☐	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☐	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☐	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☐	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
You should be able to tick NO for most of these questions. For any cases that you have ticked YES then provide details in this box. If you are using cameras/voice recorders to record interviews, then please state that in this box. N/A - no participants are involved in the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

SECTION F: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.	
1	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information. If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter N/A and go skip to question 3.	
	Risk to participants: There are always risks. Do not write N/A unless you have no participants. N/A - the research has no participants. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: N/A - the research has no participants. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	

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	N/A - the review will not collect participant disclosures or investigate sensitive, embarrassing, illegal or upsetting personal matters. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
3	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: There are always risks. Do not write NA. Low-level risks include eye strain or fatigue from prolonged screen-based reviewing and an academic-integrity risk if sources or AI-supported wording are inaccurately represented. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: The researcher will use an ergonomic workspace, take regular breaks, maintain a transparent search and extraction record, verify every claim against the original source, cite accurately and seek supervisor guidance where uncertainty arises. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
4	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There are always risks. Do not write NA. Potential institutional risks are limited to academic-integrity, copyright, data-management or reputational concerns arising from inaccurate reporting, poor referencing or inappropriate use of published material. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: The research will follow UWTSD ethics, data-management and AI guidance; use legitimate library or open-access sources; apply accurate Harvard referencing; avoid excessive reproduction of copyrighted material; and undergo supervisor review before submission. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: The environmental risk is very low and is limited to electricity use and possible paper consumption during the desk-based review. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: The project will use a digital-first workflow, avoid unnecessary printing, use energy-saving device settings and retain only essential electronic copies of research materials. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION G: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter skip this section and continue to section H.

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?	
	You don't need to email your participants with your final report. A good alternative is to set up an email address that they will be able to contact for further details or results. N/A - no participants will be recruited or debriefed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.	
	If you are using a paper questionnaire then you should have the participants sign an appropriate consent form. These forms will count as personal data and should be noted as such in section J. If you are using an online questionnaire, then you should have a screen before the questions start that acts as a consent form, informing participants that by clicking on the NEXT button they are providing consent.	

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	N/A - no participants will be recruited and no consent process is required. (this box should expand as you type)
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	Do not collect names unless you really need them. Do not name participants or organisations in any research publications (including the thesis) without their explicit permission. N/A - no participant data will be collected. (this box should expand as you type)

SECTION H: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	This includes audio/video data of participants but can also include IP addresses and usernames. Names, addresses and emails also count, as do consent forms. N/A - no personal data will be collected. The research materials will consist only of published academic sources, bibliographic records, extraction notes and dissertation drafts. (this box should expand as you type)		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	What counts as ‘sensitive’ will differ between cultures. Any information on behaviour that is not in accordance with cultural norms would count as sensitive personal data. N/A - no special-category data will be collected. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☒	☐
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐

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9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation: <i>If possible, save your data on computers that are secure and regularly backed up. Many cloud services only provide GDPR-compliant storage for business customers. An example of suitable text is given below.</i> Research materials will consist of published articles, reference-manager records, data-extraction tables and dissertation drafts. Files will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 storage and on a password-protected personal laptop with current security updates and device encryption where available. The University account will provide the main backup. No personal or special-category data will be collected. Access will be limited to the principal researcher and, where required, the supervisor and authorised markers or examiners. Unencrypted portable media will not be used, and temporary duplicate files will be securely removed when no longer required. <i>All data will be kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Audio/visual data will be transcribed and would be shown to participants to check accuracy of reporting. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder.</i> <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and/or any international equivalent): <i>This includes data such as drafts of your thesis as well as experimental or survey data. An example of suitable text is given below.</i> Electronic transfer will be limited to downloading lawfully accessible academic publications, synchronising bibliographic records and dissertation drafts with the University Office 365 account, and submitting work through authorised University systems. No personal, confidential or special-category data will be transferred. Files will be protected by account authentication, passwords and the security controls provided by the University system. <i>All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All data transfers will be encrypted and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.</i> <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

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20	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:	
	Normally the principal researcher, possibly also the supervisor and, if the project has an industrial partner, a representative of that partner. Possibly also external examiner or second marker? The principal researcher will have routine access. The supervisor and authorised University markers or examiners may access relevant research records or dissertation drafts where required for supervision and assessment. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
21	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:	
	Usually the principal researcher. The principal researcher will control and act as custodian of the research materials, subject to UWTSD requirements and supervisor oversight. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form.	
	<i>All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted.</i> Electronic copies of articles, bibliographic records, extraction tables and dissertation drafts will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 storage and on a password-protected personal laptop. The University account will serve as the principal backup. No unencrypted USB drive, CD or other removable medium will be used. Materials will be retained until the dissertation, assessment and any applicable review or appeal processes have been completed, in accordance with UWTSD data-management requirements, after which unnecessary duplicate files will be securely deleted. Published sources and the final dissertation may be retained where permitted for academic record purposes. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwttd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	☒
23	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	☒

SECTION I: Use of AI tools

Use of generative AI and other AI-based tools		YES	NO	N/A
There are a number of ethical issues relating to the use of generative AI and other AI-based tools, including data security, output bias, and output errors. In general you should assume that any generative AI or other AI-based tool that you pay to use is more secure and accurate than one which is free to use. Will the research use AI tools to do any of the following:				
1	Capture data?	☐	☒	☐
2	Generate and/or edit text?	☐	☒	☐
3	Generate graphics?	☐	☒	☐
4	Generate video?	☐	☒	☐
5	Generate sound/music?	☐	☒	☐
6	Generate code?	☐	☒	☐
7	Generate synthetic data?	☐	☒	☐
8	Analyse data?	☐	☒	☐
9	Analyse personal or sensitive data?	☐	☒	☐

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10	Classify data?	☐	☒	☐
11	Do you intend to use the free version of any AI tools?	☐	☒	☐
If you have answered YES to any of questions O1-O11, please provide justification detailing why this is necessary for the research.				
12	State which AI tool or tools you will be using, and where they are based (or store their data – you may need to check their webpages or user agreement for this). If you are planning to use Copilot then say if you're using the UWTSD version of it or the public version. You should also show how you are complying with current UWTSD guidance/policy of the use of AI. OpenAI ChatGPT, operated by the US-based provider OpenAI, may be used in a limited supporting role to help generate or edit non-confidential text, for example to improve clarity, grammar, structure and presentation. A paid version will be used; the free version is not intended. AI will not be used to capture primary data, generate synthetic data, analyse or classify the selected literature, make final inclusion decisions, or analyse personal or sensitive data. No participant information, confidential organisational material, unpublished data, login details or other personal data will be entered into the tool. AI output will not be treated as an academic source. Every factual statement, citation and interpretation will be independently checked against the original peer-reviewed literature, and the researcher will retain responsibility for the search strategy, screening, quality assessment, thematic synthesis and final written work. Any use of AI will be declared in accordance with current UWTSD guidance and the dissertation AI-use acknowledgement requirements. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION J: Declaration

The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtss.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/			
1	Signature of applicant:	Kumail Abbas	Date: 14/07/2026
2	Supervisor:	Alireza Nazarian	Date: 29/07/2026
3	Signature:	Alireza Nazarian	