

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part-time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

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".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Stephen Ogbe			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Education and Humanities: Psychology and Counselling			
4	Campus:	Swansea			
5	E-mail address:	2123384@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07398176462			
For students:					

7	Student Number:	2123384
8	Programme of Study:	MA Psychotherapeutic Practice: Humanistic
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr. Ceri Phelps

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in) Supervisor sign off (C Phelps)	☒	17.09.25	

SECTION C: 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	<i>BACP (2018) and NCPS Ethical Frameworks, BACP Research guidelines</i>				☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity N/A

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?		YES	☐	NO	☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?		YES	☐	NO	☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa	If YES then the permission question	YES	☐	NO	☐

	Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	below does not need to be answered.				
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation N/A

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	The Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Psychotherapy: A Thematic Analysis		
2	Proposed start date:	When Ethical Approval is received	Proposed end date:	June 20, 2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> <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 This study, being carried out for the Part II Dissertation for the MA Psychotherapeutic Practice programme, aims to critically examine the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Psychotherapy, with a particular focus on its effects on the lived experiences and professional outlooks of Therapists. Recognising the importance of this research, the academic landscape is agog with different levels of thoughts and ongoing reflections, urgency, curiosity, and transformation because of AI in psychotherapy. Regarding mental health care, the rapid integration of AI presents both opportunities and challenges. AI-powered systems, including chatbots, show considerable promise in addressing access and scalability issues (Stein, 2025). However, some argue that they cannot replicate the empathy, therapeutic presence, and moral accountability of a human being (Rubin et al., 2024). Bloch-Atefi (2025) critically examines the ethical tensions surrounding AI in therapy, highlighting the complexity of ensuring client privacy and maintaining professional standards when using AI systems. Spytska (2025) discusses the development of intelligent therapeutic systems and their potential to supplement therapist work but acknowledges cultural, relational, and emotional limitations. This dissertation project will seek to gain a further in-depth understanding of how current practising counsellors who have used AI within their practice perceive the challenges and opportunities of AI within their profession through semi-structured interviews.			

4	Research Question How do the professionals of Psychotherapy understand the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence on therapeutic practice?
5	Aims of Research Activity 1. Investigate how AI technologies are being incorporated into therapeutic practices 2. Explore perceived risks, barriers and facilitators associated with the use of AI in therapy (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To examine how therapists describe the AI-supported aspect of their practice 2. To explore therapists' perception of the human therapist and the AI-based tools or APPs 3. To explore whether and how therapists perceive AI as a challenge to their professional role and identity. 4. To explore risks, concerns and potential limitations that therapists associate with AI in their professional practice. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, 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	My Research Approach In this study, I have adopted a qualitative, exploratory design underpinned by Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). This approach aligns with my epistemological stance, which views knowledge as co-constructed and contextually situated. I aim to explore the lived experiences and professional insights of therapists who have engaged with artificial intelligence (AI), either as therapeutic tools or as clients themselves. I am particularly interested in how these interactions are interpreted and narrated by practitioners operating at the intersection of clinical practice and emerging technologies. I will conduct semi-structured interviews with five qualified therapists who meet specific inclusion criteria: they must have direct experience using AI in therapeutic contexts, whether as clinicians integrating AI tools or as clients engaging with AI-mediated support. Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between consistency and flexibility, allowing me to guide conversations around key thematic areas while remaining open to emergent insights. My interview schedule will be carefully constructed to reflect the aims of my research, incorporating core questions, reflective prompts, and space for spontaneous elaboration. In designing the interview guide, I will consider RTA's emphasis on meaning-making (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The guide will feature three primary components: (1) questions aligned with my research aims, (2) prompts to foster deeper reflection, and (3) opportunities for follow-up based on participants' responses. I understand that my background, beliefs, and academic training may shape

	how I conduct interviews and interpret the data. To remain transparent, I will keep a reflexive journal during the research to monitor and reflect on my influence throughout the process. Data collection will take place online using secure the video conferencing platform Teams, as this is supported by UWTSD. This decision reflects both practical and ethical considerations. Remote interviews offer accessibility for geographically dispersed participants and allow for flexible scheduling. Research also suggests that digital modalities can foster openness, particularly when participants are given agency in choosing their preferred platform (Meskill et al., 2024; Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). Each interview will be recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim using a tool such as Happy Scribe. Transcripts will be anonymised and securely stored using UWTSD's secure cloud-based OneDrive storage. The data I intend to collect will encompass both experiential depth and contextual nuance. I will begin by gathering demographic and professional background information to contextualise responses—such as age, gender, therapeutic orientation, and experience with digital tools. The core of the interview will focus on participants' engagement with AI in therapy, including the types of tools used, contexts of application, perceived benefits and limitations, and memorable cases that illustrate the complexities of AI integration. For analysis, I will follow Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework for RTA. This involves immersing myself in the data, generating initial codes, identifying and refining themes, and constructing a coherent narrative. I understand that themes are actively produced through interpretive engagement, and I will approach this process iteratively and reflexively. My goal is to produce a nuanced, ethically grounded account of how therapists navigate the evolving interface between human care and machine intelligence. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Location of Research Activity: Online - Interviews will be taking place online, through Microsoft Teams, where the Participants and I (the researcher) are situated during the session at different safe and appropriate locations, while the interview itself happens via a virtual platform. Both parties will be in a safe digital and physical environment to enhance the engagement. The following will characterise the locations for the research activities: Privacy First - Choose a quiet, enclosed space where I won't be overheard or interrupted. Minimise Distractions, Tech-Ready environment with comfort and accessibility.
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☒	☐
13	A resilient Wales	☒	☐
14	A healthier Wales	☒	☐
15	A more equal Wales	☒	☐
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☒	☐
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☒	☐
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details: The use of AI in Psychotherapy and the emerging challenges will really help Wales This research, from the perspective of human to human and human to AI therapy, will empower Wales to develop a mental health system that is truly proactive, inclusive, ethical, and holistic. Beyond ensuring clinical safety, it aims to foster a society-wide balance—one where mental well-being is deeply valued, comprehensively supported, and clearly understood at every level of community and care. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: 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.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

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

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	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: (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?	5 Participants are expected to take part in this research

		(this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	These will be Certified Therapists and Counsellors who have used AI in their Counselling Profession. Inclusion Criteria: Professional Background: Licensed or registered psychotherapists, counsellors. 2. Experience with AI in Practice: Direct experience using AI tools in therapeutic settings 3. Language and Communication: Fluent in the English language. Comfortable participating in online interviews via video or audio platforms. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	Method of Identification and Recruitment of my Participants: In this research, I intend to identify and recruit my participants through approved channels that offer access to vetted professionals and often support research participation. Information will be disseminated through these networks and potential participants will need to get in touch with me via my student email address to find out more about taking part and be sent the Participant Information Sheet. 1. Professional Networks & Organisations: • Psychotherapy associations (e.g., BACP, NCPS) • AI and mental health research groups 2. Online Recruitment I will also disseminate information about the study (once approved by supervisor) through approved digital platforms (e.g. UWTSU's Psychology and Counselling social media pages) to broaden reach: • Approved social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook groups for therapists) • Professional forums and mailing lists

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
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			
	The information sheet and consent form will be provided in electronic format with online consent captured through the online survey system Qualtrics. This means we will use an electronic tickbox format which asks participants to indicate that they give consent, a method deemed acceptable for collection of online consent according to the BPS Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research (2021). Consent will also be captured verbally at the start of the online interview to ensure that participants remain happy to take part.			

	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			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: 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.					
	If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.					
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>☒</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	☐	No	☒
Yes	☐					
No	☒					
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information					
	Risk to participants: Rights of the participant and informed consent	<i>How will you mitigate the risk to participants:</i> To mitigate this risk, I will ensure that informed consent is obtained through the provision of a clear and accessible electronic participant				

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	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	
	When conducting research that may involve sensitive, upsetting, or potentially embarrassing topics, it's essential to have clear procedures in place to protect participants' emotional well-being, legal rights, and privacy. Whilst this research will not be targeting vulnerable individuals or exploring distressing personal stories, here is how I will structure my approach Procedures for Managing Sensitive or Distressing Topics 1. Informed Consent and Advance Warning Participants will be fully informed—via the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form—that the interview may touch on sensitive topics such as mental health, sexual activity, substance use, or ethical dilemmas. They will be reminded that participation is voluntary, and they may skip any question or withdraw at any time without consequence. 2. Distress Protocol If a participant becomes visibly distressed during the interview: The interview will be paused or stopped immediately. I will offer a calm, supportive response and check in on the participant's well-being. Participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw and offered follow-up support resources. In terms of disclosing Criminal Activity or Harm: If a participant discloses information that suggests any of the following: • Current risk of harm to self or others • Ongoing abuse or safeguarding concerns • Criminal activity that poses a serious threat I will follow institutional safeguarding protocols, which may include any of the following: • Reporting to a designated safeguarding officer • Informing relevant authorities if required by law • Documenting the disclosure and actions taken These steps will be clearly outlined in the information sheet so that participants understand the limits of confidentiality.	
4	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: The following are some risks to the investigator	<i>How will you mitigate the risk to the investigator?</i> I understand that, while unlikely, there is a risk of being accused of causing harm or acting

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	and the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy, I aim to ensure that the findings are grounded in participants' voices—not my own expectations—and that the integrity of the research remains uncompromised.
Risk related to emotional distress	Emotional safety within the research process will be supported through a combination of structured reflection, collegial engagement, and access to professional support through my academic supervisor. Regular debriefing sessions with supervisor will provide opportunities to discuss emotional challenges, ethical dilemmas and other challenges that may arise during data collection and analysis. The use of reflective journaling enables me to process emotional responses, enhance self-awareness, and maintain reflexivity throughout the study. Where necessary, I will seek access to mental health support services.
Ethical and Legal Responsibility	To minimise ethical and legal risk, I will put in place safeguards throughout the study—adhering to UWTSD and BACP ethical codes, ensuring GDPR-compliant data handling, and maintaining a reflexive, respectful approach. Participants will be fully informed of their rights, and member-checking allows them to review and amend any quoted material. These measures protect both participants and me, ensuring the research is conducted with integrity, transparency, and care.
Digital Security Risks	To protect the privacy of my participants and ensure the security of all research data, I will take a careful and responsible approach to data handling. All files—including consent forms, recordings, and transcripts—will be stored on UWTSD's secure, cloud-based OneDrive platform, which offers encrypted storage and controlled access. I will also ensure that any devices used during the research process are password-protected to prevent unauthorised access. I am committed to complying fully with

	Risks related to Professional Reputation	GDPR and UWTSD data protection policies. This means personal information will be stored, processed, and disposed of lawfully and ethically. I will only retain data for as long as necessary, and access will be restricted to authorised personnel involved in the research I'm also aware that the university's reputation is tied to the ethical conduct of its researchers. By adhering to institutional policies, maintaining transparency, and handling all data securely and responsibly, I aim to protect the integrity of everyone involved in the project. This isn't just about compliance—it's about honouring the trust placed in me and conducting research that reflects the values of care, professionalism, and ethical rigour. To mitigate this risk, I will uphold professional integrity by maintaining transparency in both methodological decisions and the reporting of findings. Participants will have the opportunity to review any quotes or interpretations intended for publication, ensuring a respectful and accurate representation. This member-checking process is particularly important given the sensitive and complex nature of discussing therapeutic practice and the integration of AI. Should any ethical dilemmas arise—such as concerns around confidentiality, representation, or data use—I will seek guidance from my academic supervisor and, if necessary, the university's ethics committee. These practices will support an ethically sound, reflexive, and respectful approach to qualitative research.
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How will you mitigate the risk to the University?</i> As a researcher representing the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, I'm fully aware that the way I conduct this study reflects on the institution. To protect both the university and my participants, I will put strong safeguards in place—secure data storage on UWTSD's encrypted OneDrive, GDPR-compliant procedures, and a clear, respectful consent and debriefing process. Participants will have the chance to review any quotes before publication, helping to ensure accurate and ethical representation.

		This approach helps prevent reputational or legal risks to the university and aligns with both the UWTSD Ethics Code and the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy. For me, this project is not just about academic rigour—it's about honouring the values of integrity, care, and transparency in every step of the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A – online interviews and study materials only <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	The debrief will be sent promptly after the interview via email, using the same secure communication channel established during the recruitment process. This ensures continuity and respects the participant's preferred mode of contact. Once the initial analysis is complete, I will also offer participants the opportunity to review any quotes or interpretations that may be included in published outputs. This member-checking process enables participants to confirm, amend, or withdraw material, ensuring that their views are represented accurately and respectfully. For any questions, concerns, or further feedback, participants will be informed that they are welcome to contact me or my supervisor directly through their UWTSD email addresses. This approach reflects my commitment to ethical integrity, participant empowerment, and respectful collaboration throughout the research process. <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.

	Informed consent is a central ethical commitment in my study, reflecting my responsibility to ensure that participants—who are professionally trained therapists—make a voluntary and fully informed decision to take part. Each individual will receive both an electronic comprehensive Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form. The PIS will outline the purpose of the research, what participation involves, how data will be managed and securely stored (including the use of UWTS D’s encrypted OneDrive platform), and the rights participants hold throughout the process. For me, informed consent goes beyond obtaining a signature—it is about creating clarity, trust, and mutual understanding. I will take care to ensure that participants fully grasp what the study entails before they agree to participate. This includes their right to skip any interview question, withdraw at any point without consequence, and request the removal of any part of their transcript. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout, and all data handling will comply with GDPR and institutional ethical standards. By combining a transparent and accessible information sheet with a carefully structured two stage consent process (initial online consent via a Qualtrics link, and verbal consent re-established at the start of the interview recording), I aim to uphold ethical integrity and foster respectful, collaborative engagement with all participants.
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how the anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	In this study, both anonymity and confidentiality will be rigorously upheld to protect participants’ identities and ensure compliance with ethical standards, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 Ensuring Anonymity I will use Pseudonyms for all participants during transcription and analysis. Any identifying details—such as names, workplaces, geographic locations, or specific client references—will be removed or generalised. Quotes used in publications or presentations will be carefully edited to prevent indirect identification through context or phrasing. Participants will be informed of these measures in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and will have the opportunity to review any quotes attributed to them before dissemination. Ensuring Confidentiality Once each interview is completed, the audio recording will be securely downloaded from the recording platform directly onto the UWTS D’s encrypted OneDrive cloud storage, ensuring that the data is held in a secure, institutionally approved environment. This process helps prevent unauthorised access and aligns with GDPR and university data protection policies. The file will be clearly labelled using a participant ID code (not names) to maintain anonymity. Access will be restricted to myself and, if necessary, my supervisor—Dr Ceri Phelps—under strict confidentiality protocols. Transcription will be carried out manually within 72 hours, and the resulting text will also be stored on OneDrive. Once transcribed and anonymised, the original audio

	may be deleted in accordance with the data retention schedule outlined in the Participant Information Sheet. All communications (e.g. scheduling emails) will be conducted via secure university email accounts. Data will not be shared with third parties and will be retained only for the duration specified in the ethics protocol, after which it will be securely deleted.
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SECTION J: 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	Yes, my research activity involves the collection and processing of personal data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016) and the Data Protection Act (DPA, 2018). Description of the Data: In this study, I will collect personal data from trained therapists participating in semi-structured interviews. This includes: • Audio recordings of interviews • Transcripts of those recordings • Background information (age, gender, years of experience) • Professional reflections and experiences related to AI in therapeutic practice • Potentially identifiable information, such as job roles, therapeutic approaches, or contextual details shared during the interview All data will be anonymised during transcription, and participants will be assigned ID codes to protect their identity. No names or contact details will be included in the final dataset used for analysis. Why This Data Needs to Be Collected: The personal data is essential for exploring therapists' lived experiences and professional perspectives on the integration of AI into therapeutic practice. These insights form the core of the qualitative analysis and are necessary to address the research aims. Collecting rich, contextualised data allows for meaningful Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), ensuring that findings are grounded in authentic practitioner narratives. All data will be handled in accordance with UWTSD's Data Management Policy (2023), stored securely on the university's encrypted OneDrive platform, and used solely for the purposes outlined in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.		
	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	(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?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites? The university storage is encrypted, and double verification process	☒	☐
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:		
	All study data and research reports or publications will be stored on a UWTSD password-protected OneDrive folder. At the end of the interview, the collected data will be stored on the researcher's two-step authenticator-protected OneDrive account. All OneDrive-stored data will be transcribed within 72 hours and stored securely on OneDrive. Pseudonyms will replace names and contextual data of the participants. Only the researcher will have access to the primary recordings and non-anonymised secondary data. Once transcription is completed, all primary recordings will be destroyed. Once anonymised transcriptions are complete, they will be labelled and stored securely on the university's secure cloud-based storage system with participants' code and date. Hard copy drafts of interview transcripts used for the purposes of analysis and/or hard copies drafts of the dissertation will only contain already anonymised data.		

Data Protection			
		YES	NO
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:		
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	Use of a data management system? (discuss this with supervisor on analysis)	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	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 any international equivalents, where appropriate): The participants' information sheet will make it clear to all participants that they have a right to expect that information they provide when completing the study will be treated confidentially in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016), Data Protection Act (2018) and the UWTSD Data Management Policy. I will do the following: A. Use Secure Platforms: I will use UWTSD's secure systems as previously described. B. Encrypting Files Before Sending I will only be sending anonymised encrypted files—such as anonymised interview transcripts—to my academic supervisor, Dr Ceri Phelps. This is done to facilitate supervisory review, ethical compliance, or administrative processing, while ensuring that sensitive participant data remains protected. C. Minimise Data Shared I will ensure that I only share the minimum necessary personal data with my academic supervisor if necessary. I will avoid including identifiers like names, contact details, or sensitive health information unless essential. I will anonymise or pseudonymise data where possible. <i>this box should expand as you type</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Stephen Ogbe (student) will have access to the primary (non-anonymised data) Dr Ceri Phelps (supervisor) will have access to the secondary anonymised data.		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Stephen Ogbe		
24	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. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	The collection of informed consent, demographic data, interview recordings and transcripts will all be stored in line with UWTSD data management policy (2021). Documents that are stored on OneDrive (online) will have password protection with a two-step verification process. The primary data will be deleted from OneDrive, and the anonymised transcripts will be allowed to remain to give room for the final report to be produced.		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	no <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: 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.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	Stephen Ogbe	Date: 28.09.25

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr Ceri Phelps	Date: 29.09.25
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY



All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.