

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:	Mohammed Nur Navi Jahin
2	Student Number:	2503765
3	Email address:	2503765@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	Master of Business Administration
5	Supervisor:	Ebad Banissi

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 - confirmed	☐
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 principles for secure handling of research files	☒
4	UWTSD guidance on responsible academic use of generative AI tools	☒

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	ESG Communication, Pharmaceutical Innovation and Corporate Reputation in the Post-Pandemic Era: A Comparative Secondary Thematic Analysis of AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc		
2	Proposed start date:	18 June, 2026	Proposed end date:	17 July, 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: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i>			

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	- Objectives of Research Activity Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain - What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge - How it addresses an area of importance.
3	This research will examine how AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc communicate ESG commitments and pharmaceutical innovation in the post-pandemic era. The study is desk-based and uses public secondary documents only. It will focus on how corporate reports, sustainability or responsible-business materials, access-to-healthcare communication, research and development narratives and selected public context sources present responsibility, innovation, social value, trust and reputation. The project is important because pharmaceutical companies operate in a sector where public trust, responsible conduct and scientific credibility are closely connected. The study will not test stakeholder opinion or make claims about actual reputation effects. Instead, it will interpret how communication themes may support reputational positioning.
4	- How have AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc communicated their ESG strategies in the post-pandemic era? - How is pharmaceutical innovation framed in relation to public value, trust and corporate responsibility? - Which ESG themes dominate the corporate communication of AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc? - How do AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc differ in their ESG and innovation communication strategies? - How do ESG communication and innovation communication reinforce reputational positioning? - What lessons can pharmaceutical communication managers learn from the comparison of these two organisations?
5	To investigate how ESG communication and pharmaceutical innovation influence corporate reputation in the post-pandemic pharmaceutical sector through a comparative secondary thematic analysis of AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc.
6	- To review relevant literature on ESG communication, pharmaceutical innovation and corporate reputation. - To examine how pharmaceutical innovation is communicated in the post-pandemic period. - To analyse the ESG communication strategies used by AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc. - To compare similarities and differences between AstraZeneca plc and GSK plc. - To explore how ESG communication and innovation communication contribute to corporate reputation. - To develop practical recommendations for corporate communication managers in the pharmaceutical sector.
	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	The research will collect secondary documentary data only. The main sources will be publicly available AstraZeneca and GSK materials from the 2021-2025 operational period, supplemented by relevant company webpages and reporting archives where they fall within the research boundary. The expected document sample will include annual reports, sustainability or responsible-business reports, ESG data annexes, access-to-healthcare materials, research and development communication, innovation-related public statements and selected press releases. Academic literature and credible external sources will be used for context and triangulation, particularly when interpreting potential reputational implications. Documents will be downloaded or accessed from public websites, university library resources or official company report archives. A source log will record the document title, organisation, publication year, URL or database location and relevance to the research questions. Relevant text extracts will then be manually coded using Braun and Clarke thematic analysis. The manual coding process will support transparency and reduce dependence on specialist qualitative-analysis software whose availability can vary by access and cost. No questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation, audio/video recording, social media tracking, confidential organisational access or private personal data will be used. If any primary data method is later considered, additional ethical approval will be sought before that activity begins.

SECTION D: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?		X
2	Use of interviews?		X
3	Use of focus groups?		X
4	Use of participant diaries?		X
5	Use of video or audio recording?		X
6	Use of computer-generated log files?		X
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?		X
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?		X
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?		X

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10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?		X
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?		X
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?		X
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?		X
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?		X
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?		X
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?		X
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		X
	None. The study is a secondary documentary analysis using public documents and academic sources only.		

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?		X
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?		X
3	Vulnerable adults?		X
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)		X
5	Prisoners?		X
6	Young offenders?		X
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?		X
8	People engaged in illegal activities?		X
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		X
	Not applicable. There are no participants or participant groups in this study.		

	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?	0. No human participants will be recruited.
11	Who will the participants be?	Not applicable. The research uses public secondary documents only.
12	How will you identify the participants?	Not applicable. There will be no recruitment, sampling or contact with participants.

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	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?			X
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?			X
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?			X
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?			X
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?			X
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?			X
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?			X
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?			X
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?			X
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	Not applicable. The study has no participants and no primary data collection.			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?			X
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?			X
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?		X	
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?			X
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	Not applicable. No participants will be paid, recorded, equipped, misled or recruited. There are no financial or other interests arising from the study.			

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.	
	Not applicable. There are no human participants, no recruitment and no participant data.	No participant-facing activity will take place. The study will use only public documents and academic sources.
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	
	No such procedures are required because there are no participants and no direct data collection from individuals.	
3	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Low risk of source misinterpretation, confirmation bias,	The researcher will keep a source log, compare company

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	overreliance on company self-presentation and normal desk-based workload or screen fatigue.	materials with academic and credible external sources, use cautious wording, check citations and take regular breaks during desk-based work.
4	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Low institutional risk if public documents are quoted inaccurately, cited poorly or interpreted as proving reputational effects beyond the evidence.	The study will use accurate Harvard referencing, short quotations only where necessary, careful paraphrasing and clear language that frames reputation conclusions as potential implications.
5	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Minimal environmental risk. The project is desk-based and does not involve travel, fieldwork, laboratory work, physical sampling or environmental intervention.	Research will be completed electronically where possible. Printing will be avoided unless required for supervision or submission.

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?
	Not applicable. No participants will take part, so no participant debriefing or feedback process is required.
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 not required because the study does not involve participants or primary data collection. All research material will be public documents, academic literature or credible public-context sources.
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.
	There are no participant anonymity or confidentiality issues. The dissertation will not contain private personal data. Public organisations and public documents will be cited transparently, and any public individual names will be used only where already published and directly relevant to source attribution.

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.		X
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	No participant personal data will be collected. The study will not collect names, addresses, email addresses, IP addresses, usernames, consent forms, audio recordings or video recordings. Public corporate documents and published academic sources will be used as documentary evidence.		
	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,		X

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	(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	No special category data will be collected or analysed. The study concerns corporate communication and public documents, not private information about identifiable individuals.		

	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)?		X
6	University computers?		X
7	Private company computers?		X
8	Home or other personal computers?	X	
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	X	
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	X	
11	Other – specify:		X
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:		
	Working files will be stored on a password-protected personal computer and/or secure cloud storage used for the dissertation. Files will not be publicly shared. The dataset will consist of public documents, source logs, coding notes and dissertation drafts. No participant identifiers will be created, so anonymisation and pseudonymisation are not required. If any file transfer is required for supervision or submission, it will be completed through password-protected or university-approved systems. Working copies will be retained only as required for completion, marking, audit and university requirements.		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	X	
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?		X
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?		X
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?		X
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?		X
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?		X
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):		
	Electronic transfer will be limited to normal academic submission, supervisor review or university review through approved learning, email or cloud systems. No participant personal data or special category data will be transferred. Public documents may be downloaded from company, academic or public websites, but no confidential dataset will be exported outside the UK or shared with external organisations.		
20	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Mohammed Nur Navi Jahin, the dissertation supervisor when allocated, relevant module/programme staff, markers, external examiner and ethics reviewers where required by the University.		
21	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Mohammed Nur Navi Jahin will act as custodian of the working research files during the dissertation. University submission and retention processes will apply to the final submitted work.		

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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.	
	The working dataset will consist of public documents, downloaded reports where permitted, source logs, coding notes and dissertation drafts. These will be kept in password-protected storage and organised in project folders. No participant data will be created. Files will be retained until the project has been completed and assessed, and then kept or deleted in line with University requirements. Any unnecessary duplicate downloads or temporary working copies will be removed when no longer needed.	
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtss.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	X
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	X

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?		X	
2	Generate and/or edit text?	X		
3	Generate graphics?		X	
4	Generate video?		X	
5	Generate sound/music?		X	
6	Generate code?		X	
7	Generate synthetic data?		X	
8	Analyse data?		X	
9	Analyse personal or sensitive data?		X	
10	Classify data?		X	
11	Do you intend to use the free version of any AI tools?		X	
AI tools may be used only for limited research-support tasks such as research scoping, source-check prompts, grammar improvement, clarity editing and proofreading. This is necessary to support academic writing quality and organisation, but it will not replace the researcher's judgement. AI will not be used to collect data, analyse thematic data, classify evidence, generate synthetic data, process personal or sensitive data, or create findings. All AI-assisted wording will be reviewed, checked against the researcher's intended meaning and verified source material, edited where necessary and accepted only under the researcher's academic responsibility.				
12	The AI tool expected to be used is OpenAI ChatGPT or similar generative AI writing-support software. The researcher will review the applicable tool terms and privacy information before use. To reduce risk, no confidential university information, unpublished company data, personal data, participant data or special category data will be entered into AI tools. The researcher will comply with current UWTSD guidance on AI use, will acknowledge permitted AI support where required, and will treat AI output as editable support rather than evidence.			

SECTION J: Declaration

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	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:	Mohammed Nur Navi Jahin	
2	Supervisor:	Ebad Banissi	07 July 2026
3	Signature:	Mohammed Nur Navi Jahin	