Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment

Did you know that you may not start data collection until you have research ethics clearance?

ETHICS IN RESEARCH FOR POSTGRADUATES

Why is it necessary to apply for research ethics clearance?
- Good scholarship requires that researchers consider any potential harmful impacts of their research, treat their data sources with respect, and recognise the contributions of other scholars fairly. The research ethics application process is intended to facilitate this.
- All master and doctoral degree research in EBE requires research ethics clearance. Theses, dissertations and research projects will not be examined without evidence that ethics clearance has been provided.

When should research ethics clearance be applied for?
- Research ethics clearance should be applied for as soon as the research method is clear.
- In the case of research involving human subjects, research ethics application should occur after survey instruments have been designed.

What information is necessary for research ethics applications?
- A covering note that: explains the purpose of the research to a non-expert in the field; identifies possible ethical issues; and describes how these issues will be addressed. Examples of possible ethical issues include: obtaining the informed consent of data sources; ensuring the anonymity of respondents; obtaining permission to use secondary datasets; and storing sensitive information. Guidance on what issues to consider can be found in the EBE EiR Handbook (downloadable from http://www.ebe.uct.ac.za/ebe/research/ethics1).
- A research proposal that identifies the research objectives and describes the method to be used in meeting these objectives.
- If human subjects are involved, the list of questions and the means of obtaining informed consent.
- An application form signed by the student and the supervisor. (The form is downloaded during the on-line submission process.)

How is a research ethics application submitted?
- Follow the on-line submission instructions provided on the EBE EiR webpage http://www.ebe.uct.ac.za/ebe/research/ethics1.

Who provides research ethics clearance?
- For all <120-credit dissertation research, and ≥120-credit dissertation research not involving human subjects, approval is provided by the Head of Department (or delegated nominee).
- For ≥120 credit dissertation research involving human subjects, approval is provided by the Chair of the EBE EiR Committee.
- For all doctoral degree research, approval is provided by the Chair of the EBE EiR Committee.
- Additional approval is required from the Executive Directors of Student Affairs and Human Resources, respectively, when the human subjects in research are UCT students and staff.
- If the research involves clinical tests on humans or animals, approval is provided by the Health Sciences EiR and Animal Ethics Committees.