Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals

Title of Research _____

Researcher's Name _____

Trinity Email Address _____

Supervisor Name (if applicable) _____

Supervisor Email (if applicable) _____

Category of Proposer (please tick) **Student** ☐
Principal Investigator (Staff) ☐

If you are a student, please complete the following:

Student Number _____

Course of Study (please tick) **BMusEd** ☐ **PME** ☐ **MEd** ☐ **DEd/PhD** ☐

ASIAP ☐ **CertC21T&L** ☐

Please indicate the level of approval required (see appendix)

Level 0 ☐ **Level 1** ☐ **Level 2** ☐

1. Please give a structured abstract of the proposed research, including the methods you intend to use (approx. 300 words).

Theoretical Background

Recent research in the area of X has demonstrated that…

The following research questions have been identified in order to investigate this topic:

1. Research Question 1
2. Research Question 2

Detailed description of methods and fieldwork instruments

In order to address these research questions, the following fieldwork-based project is proposed: Questionnaires will be designed and 211 Junior Cycle second-level students (age 12-14 years) in School X, Town Y will be invited to participate. The questionnaire will be

Comment [A1]: Locate the research within the broader context of research in the field, paying special attention to ethical considerations as applicable.

Comment [A2]: Outline the research questions for the project.

Comment [A3]: As research instruments are not normally required for applications for ethical approval, the description of methods and instruments should be very detailed.

Comment [A4]: Describe the research instrument.

Comment [A5]: State who will be invited to participate.

adapted from the internationally-recognised and validated questionnaire designed by Researcher A. The questionnaire contains 40 questions that address [describe the topic here], including questions such as [provide some sample questions here]. Participants will answer using a Lickert scale and it is anticipated that it will normally take no longer than 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be administered at school, during school hours, and at a time that suits the participants and that does not disrupt their formal studies.

In addition to the questionnaire, a random sample of the student participants will be invited to take part in individual interviews with the researcher. It is anticipated that between 10-15 participants will take part in this part of the fieldwork. The interview will provide a qualitative perspective on the research questions and will allow the researcher to seek clarification regarding some of the responses that emerged from the questionnaire. The semi-structured interviews, adapted from the interview schedule designed by Researcher A, will therefore further address [describe the topic here] and will again include questions such as [provide some sample questions here], allowing participants a free response. It is anticipated that the interviews will last between 30 minutes and one hour. The questionnaire will be administered at school, during school hours, and at a time that suits the participants and that does not cause any disruption to their formal studies.

Comment [A6]: If the questionnaire is previously validated, state this. If it is not, indicate how it complies with ethical requirements in your area.

Comment [A7]: Provide details on the number of questions and their nature, and describe how long participation will last.

Comment [A8]: If there is more than one instrument, separately describe each of them in detail.

2. Please answer the following questions in relation to your proposed research. Questions (b), (c) or (d) will require detailed explanations if answered 'yes' and will be referred for additional scrutiny by the REC or Trinity REPC. Answering 'Yes' to (e) will require a separate application to the relevant HSE REC.	**Please tick**	
	Yes	**No**
a. Does the research involve work with children (under-18) or vulnerable adults?		
If 'Yes', has appropriate Garda clearance (or equivalent) been obtained (include details)?		
Please provide the date of issue on the Certificate.		
b. Could any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher(s)?		
c. Could any aspect of the research produce information that could lead to criminal prosecution of the participants or others?		
d. Is deception of the participants planned in any aspect of the research? If yes, provide details.		
e. Does any aspect of the research involve patients (or their relatives or carers) or other users of health and social care services, the premises or facilities of such services, access to personal records or the participation of health or social care staff?		

Comment [A9]: Include the date on the Garda Clearance Certificate.

3. (a) Who are the proposed participants, e.g. teachers; students?

The proposed participants for this study are the first year students from School X, in Town Y, County Dublin. 211 students aged between 12-14 years will be invited to participate.

3. (b) What is your relationship with them? (If you are in a position of authority, for example, indicate how you will deal with the potential influences of such a relationship.)

I teach the students that I hope to invite to participate in the study. Students will be made aware that participation in entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at

Comment [A10]: Name school(s) and location(s) if known, or provide the most detailed information available. This will be dealt with in strictest confidence.

Comment [A11]: State number of participants and age as applicable.

Comment [A12]: State relationship with targeted participants.

Comment [A13]: Indicate how you will negate the influence of the relationship, if applicable.

any time, without having to give a reason and without prejudice. Students will be made aware that there is no extra credit or course material incentive for partaking in this study. Students will be made aware that they may talk to the researcher or an independent party about the project if they wish.

4. (a) How will you recruit them?

Recruitment for this study will be voluntary among first year students at School X. Following consent from school management (see attached principal information sheet and consent form), the nature of the study will be described in detail by the researcher to potential student participants. It will be made clear that students are not obliged to participate and that they can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without prejudice. Interested students will then be presented with an information sheet (see attached student information sheet) and invited to participate in the study. For those willing to participate in the research, signed student and parental/guardian consent forms (see attached parent information sheet and student/parent consent forms), will be required before commencing their involvement in the research. The consent process is described in 4b).

Comment [A14]: Provide a detailed, step-by-step description of the recruitment process so that it could be replicated from reading this section.

4. (b) Please indicate how informed consent of all participants will be gained. (Draft consent forms MUST be attached – see question 8 for guidance.)

All parties involved in the project will be informed of the structure and purpose of the research and completed consent forms will be required before the study is conducted. An information sheet and consent form (Appendix A) will be presented to the principal of the school in which the study is based. The research, and the nature/duration of the students' participation, will be described to the principal and written consent will be sought to proceed with the research in the school (see attached principal consent form). The study will be described to students in person. The attached information sheet will be provided and they will be asked to indicate their consent to take part using the attached consent form. An information sheet and consent form (see attached), will also be sent home with students for their parent(s)/guardian to complete if willing to take part in the study. No data will be collected until all forms are returned and signed by all relevant parties.

Comment [A15]: State that participation will only commence after consent of all parties has been granted.

Comment [A16]: If applicable, state how principal consent will be sought.

Comment [A17]: Indicate, as applicable, how student consent will be sought.

Comment [A18]: State how parental consent will be sought, if applicable.

4. (c) Please detail any ethical aspects that must be considered, including the proposed use of any incentives.

The research will adhere to Trinity's Policy on Good Research Practice (see link below). It will be based on a) respect for the participants, b) beneficence & the absence of maleficence, and c) justice. No incentives will be offered and there are no further ethical aspects that must be considered in the recruitment of the proposed participants. All participants will participate on an informed and voluntary basis and they will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without prejudice. Participation will be arranged at a time that suits the students and so as to cause minimum disruption to their formal studies.

https://www.tcd.ie/research/dean/assets/pdf/FINAL_Good%20Research%20Practice%20policy_COUNCIL%20APPROVEDandminutedgg.pdf

Comment [A19]: There are always ethical aspects and they should be described here.

5. (a) What is the location(s) at which the data collection will be undertaken?

Data collection will take place in a classroom in School X.

Comment [A20]: State the exact location, if known, or provide the most detailed information available.

5. (b) Describe any circumstances that might give rise to security concerns for participants or researchers?

There are no known security concerns beyond those encountered by participants and the researcher in everyday life. Any data collected will be securely stored and password protected, as described in Section 7.

5. (c) Describe any conflicts of interest where data might be critical of working practices, people etc. or disclosure of illegal activities?

There are no known conflicts of interested associated with this research project. Participants may be critical of current practice in this area. The research findings may highlight how current practices in the data collection location diverge from recognised best practice. If this occurs, the researcher will report this in a professional, constructive manner. The potential for the disclosure of illegal activity is very low in this research and it is not anticipated. If this does occur, the data will be excluded from the dataset and the relevant authorities will be notified.

6. (a) Please indicate how the participants' rights to privacy (including confidentiality and anonymity) and the privacy of their data will be protected. Highlight potential limitations of confidentiality in the ethics form and, for participants, in the information sheets (e.g. for small samples or insider research and how this will be addressed).

Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured for all participants. Neither the participants nor the school will be named in the study. Participants' identities will be anonymised by randomly assigning ID numbers. Pseudonyms will be used for the school name and address so that they will not be identifiable in what is written. The researcher will not observe the participants as they complete the questionnaires, surveys, scales. In this way, responses will not be attributed to individuals.

6. (b) Please also indicate how the data will be stored (and ultimately destroyed as appropriate).

Data will be stored and destroyed in line with the relevant Irish Data-Protection legislation (Data Protection Act 1988, 2003: https://www.dataprotection.ie/docs/Data-Protection-Acts-1988-and-2003:-Informal-Consolidation/796.htm). The data will be stored on a USB and computer folder, both encrypted. All questionnaires and surveys will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's school at all times. Access to raw data will be limited to the research team and, potentially, examiners. Data will be retained for 10 years. Following this period, all electronic copies of the data will be deleted from all storage sites and all paper copies will be shredded.

7. Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of consent. **(Note that the consent forms must accompany this application; any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).**	**Please tick**
I have attached (an) appropriate consent form(s) which include the freedom to withdraw at any stage without having to offer a reason.	
Each consent form has full contact details of the researcher to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries.	

Comment [A21]: Outline any security concerns for the participants or for the researcher.

Comment [A22]: Indicate any conflict of interest, or potential instances of criticism and how they would be dealt with.

Comment [A23]: Indicate that there is (low) potential for disclosure of illegal activity and how that would be dealt with.

Comment [A24]: Illustrate how the identities of participants will be protected?

Comment [A25]: Show how the identities of the data collection location(s) will be protected.

Comment [A26]: Indicate how the responses of participants will remain anonymous to the research team.

Comment [A27]: Indicate that you will comply with the relevant legislation.

Comment [A28]: State where electronic data will be stored.

Comment [A29]: Electronic data should be encrypted.

Comment [A30]: Explain where 'hard' copies of raw data will be stored and how access will be restricted.

Comment [A31]: State who will have access to raw data.

Comment [A32]: Say how long data will be retained. The School of Education requires that students' data is available for inspection for at least 5 years. Legislation requires that data is not kept for any longer than the stated purpose.

Comment [A33]: State how electronic and 'hard' copies of data will be destroyed.

Comment [A34]: Please only tick this box if you have included the relevant forms with your application.

Comment [A35]: Please only tick this box if you have included the relevant details in your application.

Each information sheet/consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate.	
Each information sheet/consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes	
Each information sheet/consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate	
Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc.) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, and that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to provide a reason	
Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s)	

Comment [A36]: Please only tick this box if the information sheet/consent form meets these criteria.

Comment [A37]: Tick this box only in the case that this information is included in your information sheet/consent form.

Comment [A38]: Only tick this box if your application adequately describes these matters.

If you have any further comments or notes in relation to any aspect of your application, please outline them here:

Has your proposal been submitted to any other Research Ethics Committee?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

If yes, please provide details:

Declaration by All Applicants:

I have read and understood the School of Education's policy on ethics in educational research: https://www.tcd.ie/Education/ethics/ and Trinity College Dublin's Policy on Good Research Practice: https://www.tcd.ie/research/dean/assets/pdf/TCD%20Good%20Research%20Practice%20Policies%20copy.pdf

I declare that the details above reflect accurately my research proposal and I undertake to seek updated approval if substantive changes are proposed after this submission. I have consulted an authoritative set of educational research guidelines.

Comment [A39]: Signing this declaration indicates that you comply with the above. Please do not sign this section and submit your application until you meet these criteria.

Applicant's Signature:

Signed: **Date**

Declaration by Supervisor (if applicable)

I have read this application. I am satisfied that it is in line with the criteria set out by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee in their published Code of Practice and application form templates.

Comment [A40]: For student applications, supervisors are important gate-keepers and provide important guidance. Supervisors are invited to sign this declaration if they are satisfied that the application meets the criteria outlined.

Supervisor's Signature:

Signed: **Date**

In instances where supervisors feel that their specialised expertise may be important, information for the REC to take into account (e.g. in relation to researching highly sensitive areas such as trauma/abuse), please submit an additional page with any relevant information.

Final Approval Signed-Off by a member of the Research Ethics Committee

Signed: Date

Trinity College Dublin

School of Education

Application for Ethical Approval of

Notes for Staff and Students prior to completing the application form:

1. The University requires all research activity to be subjected to ethical scrutiny and this form is designed to enable the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee (REC) to assess any research proposed by members of staff or students.

2. Please state whether you require ethical approval at **Level 0**, **Level 1** or **Level 2**.

Level 0 ethical approval

For example, your research activity is classified as Level 0 if your research does not involve human (or animal) participants. Here are some examples:

1. Quality assurance studies (e.g. assessment of teaching practice records)
2. Audits of standard practice (not involving identifiable records)
3. Research on publicly available information, documents or data sets

If applying for approval at Level 0, please indicate this clearly on the form. Level 0 approval requires the applicant to complete the personal details section, Section 1, and to include the necessary signatures. Students, please note that all applications require a supervisor signature.

Level 1 ethical approval

This is **no risk to relatively low risk research** – i.e. research carrying little or no risks or discomfort greater than usually encountered during normal daily life, for example:

1. Anonymous surveys of a non-intrusive personal nature.
2. Unrecorded and anonymous observation of individuals in public areas.
3. Analysis of irrevocably anonymised and appropriately collected data.
4. Interviews (consensual) with non-vulnerable adults.
5. Action research (Research initiated to solve an immediate problem or a reflective process of progressive problem solving conducted either by individuals on their own practice or by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a "community of practice" to improve the way they address issues and solve problems [participatory action research]).
6. Surveys where respondents can be identified and where respondents have given appropriate consent.

Level 2 ethical approval

Moderate to high-risk research (i.e. risk or discomfort is greater than that usually encountered during normal daily life). This includes ALL RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN (i.e. under 18 years of age) and VULNERABLE ADULTS (i.e. participants with an intellectual disability).

MODERATE RISK

1. Surveys asking questions of a sensitive or private nature
2. Questionnaires or observational studies involving children or vulnerable adults.
3. Research where there is a risk of a participant feeling undue pressure to participate by virtue of his/her relationship with the researcher (e.g. student/supervisor; teacher/student).
4. Projects involving a justifiable degree of deception.

HIGH RISK

5. Research involving children and vulnerable adults.
6. Research where identifiable information obtained may have legal, economic or social consequences for research subjects.
7. Research that may identify illegal activity.
8. Projects where each subject is paid (over and above token gestures).
9. Research that may potentially endanger the subjects, and/or researchers, and/or 3rd parties, and/or the environment.
10. Research that may have a direct military role.
11. Research conducted outside Ireland.
12. Research involving psychological intervention.
13. Research where a potentially beneficial or harmful treatment, information or learning method may be withheld from some participants.

Additional notes

1. In situations where research ethics approval has been granted by an appropriate research ethics committee elsewhere, the submission may qualify for fast-tracked approval processing in TCD.
2. Unless otherwise noted, research involving adults assumes adults with a capacity to consent. Vulnerable groups/persons are described as:
    - individuals who face excessive risk of being enrolled in research, including those with limitations in their ability to provide informed consent to research because of factors such as immaturity or cognitive impairment.
    - vulnerability can also stem from individuals' relationships with others, and it is imperative that coercive situations are avoided. Such cases may occur when an employee/student/dependent is asked to participate in research being conducted by a supervisor/mentor.
3. Additional social factors, such as poverty and lack of access to health care, can also make individuals vulnerable to coercion, exploitation or other risks and need to be considered in reviewing applications.

4. The primary focus for approval is research involving people. Where the participants include **children or vulnerable adults**, research cannot proceed unless all researchers involved have obtained Garda vetting. In principle, all research in Trinity School of Education should be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of all participants (including to privacy of data, confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate), causes no harm to participants or researchers, and requires the active, fully informed consent of all participants and their parents, carers, guardians or relevant responsible others.
5. In the case of **Level 1 and Level 2 ethical approval applications**, information sheets and consent forms **must be attached to the application** in relation to participants and their parents/guardians and principals, as applicable. It should therefore be demonstrated clearly that prospective participants are being fully informed about the purpose of the research and their role in it, how their data will be gathered, the purposes to which their data will be used and how their right to privacy (confidentiality and anonymity) will be respected. For research involving children, use the guidelines produced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs: http://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/Publications/Ethics_Guidance.pdf .
6. Educational research undertaken outside Ireland must adhere to the same ethical standards as research in Ireland. Any additional regulations (e.g. police clearance) and cultural sensitivities of the host country must also be observed.
7. Some **Level 2 ethical approval applications** may need to be referred to the Trinity Research Ethics Policy Committee (REPC) where proposals:
   - have the potential to cause harm to participants or researchers, directly physical or psychological;
   - may give rise to situations in which the researchers have to make statutory disclosure of illegal activity, whether on the part of participants or others;
   - seek to deceive participants for any reason;
   - may give rise to situations that may put the participants or researchers in any form of jeopardy.
8. If any changes to the approved research proposal are made:
   i. **For Students**: these must be discussed with your supervisor, and may require additional ethical approval;
   ii. **For Staff**: substantive changes need to be clarified with the REC and may require additional approval.
9. This form along with any correspondence that is undertaken as a follow-up (e.g. approval letter, request for amendments etc.) will be kept as a formal record of the scrutiny process, for inspection as required by the University authorities. As such, proposers should ensure that proposals are presented to a professional standard as they will be returned for resubmission if deemed not to have been adequately prepared.

For M.Ed. and PME students: Applications must be submitted via Blackboard following all of the steps of the process, including supervisor approval.

For research students and staff, two copies of this ethics form must be submitted:

1. a hard copy with ORIGINAL SIGNATURES and information sheets/consent forms must be submitted to **the REC administrator: Ethical Approvals, Room 3087 School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, College Green, Dublin 2**
2. an electronic copy (does not require signatures) and information sheets/consent forms must also be emailed to Phdrsrch@tcd.ie.

PLEASE NOTE: In the case of research student applicants, the form MUST be signed by the student applicant and approved and signed by the supervisor prior to submission otherwise it will be returned.

Ethical approval is not granted until a formal response has been issued to the researcher by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee. For PME and M.Ed. students this will be issued as a pass grade for the ethics submission in Blackboard. For all other applications, a letter of approval will be issued.

No data collection is approved until this formal response has been received.

For student applications, confirmation of ethics approval is included as an appendix in the final thesis submission.