**Guidelines for preparing S-SPEC applications**

These guidelines are applicable to any research project by undergraduate or postgraduate taught students that requires S-SPEC ethical approval. Please refer to the flowchart to ensure you are applying to the correct ethics committee. For S-SPEC applications, the following documents must be included with the application:

1. **Application form**

Applicants need to fill in all the relevant parts of the application form and ask their research supervisor to approve and sign when complete showing their authorisation. If you intend recruiting student participants then you should also ask the relevant year lead for the target group to sign their authorisation

1. **Participant information sheet**

This must be included where applicable to enable fully informed consent from participants. A template for this is available on the S-SPEC website

1. **Participant consent form**

Consent forms must be included with the application where applicable. A template for this is available on the S-SPEC website

1. **Lay summary**

A lay summary of the research project proposal needs to be included with the application. In **NO MORE THAN** two sides of A4 paper please provide the reasons why you are carrying out this project to illustrate the ethical issues in context. Include your aims and objectives and research question where applicable and give a clear account of the methods used. The information provided should include:-

* The process - be very clear about the ‘process’ – a flow chart can be very useful for reviewers
* What exactly are you doing?
* Who are you doing it with?
* Gatekeeping – do you need to get permission from anyone? If so, who (e.g. year leads, module director)?
* Who, how many and how are you recruiting? If numbers are flexible linked to methodology say so.
* When and how do ‘individuals’ get the information sheet or equivalent?
* When and how do ‘individuals’ give consent?
* When are things going to happen?
* Where do things take place etc.?
* How long (for example) are interviews (if this is flexible due to your methodology, say so); how long will it take to fill in questionnaires? How are questionnaires circulated to participants?
* Who sees the data? Consider password protection for computers
* How the data will be ‘looked after’ and stored and access by appropriate Keele staff ensured? Consider the University Guidelines for the storage of sensitive and confidential data on portable devices (2011) available from <http://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/fait/it/servicedeskinformation/policyandguidance/Portable%20Device%20Security-V2.pdf>
* Consider how data can be removed for any participants wishing to withdraw during different points of the research and at what point this can be done. Ensure you include this in your consent and information sheet.

1. **Peer review pro forma**

Applications also need to obtain a peer review of their research project proposal. This should be completed by a member of staff that is **not directly involved** in the project. Pro formas for this are available on the S-SPEC website.

1. **Form KF105**

This form is required for any research project proposals that intend to use cadaveric materials. Form KF105 should be completed by the appropriate anatomy staff and a copy submitted with the S-SPEC application.

1. **Other relevant information**

Any other information that is relevant to the research project proposal that will help S-SPEC make an informed decision should be submitted. This may include, but not be limited to, copies of questionnaires and interview schedules.

**General tips for consideration about the process/documentation**

* Use appropriate and consistent language for all letters, information sheet etc.
* For all documents – consider your audience (lay, expert, research, practice, policy, etc)
* Consider briefly introducing yourself first as a student/researcher in the invitation and information sheet – doesn’t need to be a biography, and does need to steer away from unduly influencing the would-be participant ahead of them reading the information
* Information Sheets – is all the information there? Have you checked against the template Information Leaflet for content?
* Be clear about confidentiality and anonymity – they are different
* Be clear about at what point participants can withdraw from the research – this may be before analysis, focus groups etc
* Include contact details – as a Keele student/staff member

**BEFORE** you hand in check thoroughly:

* Have you filled in **all** the sections in the application form?
* Be consistent-does everything you say in your application form -
* match everything you say in your summary?
* match everything you say in your information sheet?
* match everything you say in your consent form etc.?
* Contact details: yours and if applicable your supervisor’s - are they where they should be? (*Do not use personal telephone numbers)*

**Before submitting your application, please ensure that all the above documents are included. You should allow 3 weeks (15 working days) for a decision to be made. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that approval is obtained before potential participants are approached to take part in your study**