

MBChB Policy: Supporting Students to Conduct Research

Note: Please read in conjunction with policy on “Supporting Students to Attend Academic Conferences”

Background

The School of Medicine encourages students studying for their undergraduate qualification in medicine to make the most of unique opportunities to become involved in educational research projects. It is important however to distinguish between those research projects which fall *within* the core curriculum requirements and those that *do not*. For research undertaken as part of core curriculum requirements (via the Research and Scholarship theme).

PLEASE NOTE: For all projects, project supervisors are responsible for ensuring projects have all the correct permissions, including any ethical approvals from either the University or relevant NHS body.

The School of Medicine wishes to encourage all students who are interested in taking part in research to explore opportunities for doing so.

For all research projects, it is important that:

- The School ensures that students wishing to take these research opportunities are also able to meet the MBChB course and curriculum requirements.
- The appropriate approval is sought and granted *before* embarking on a research project.
- The School can ensure that research projects are not duplicated, therefore wasting the time of both researchers and students asked to take part in research

It should be noted that research projects include all peer-to-peer student surveys, interviews and focus groups, whether the results are intended for eventual publication or not.

The following requirements are set by the School of Medicine in order to enable all students have fair access to these research opportunities during their studies.

How to seek approval from the School of Medicine

The approval process involves two stages, which are set out below.

Stage 1: Gatekeeper Approval.

All study areas in the University of Liverpool have a 'gatekeeper' included in the approvals process for research projects. The gatekeeper for anyone wishing to undertake research with medical students at the University of Liverpool, is the Vice Dean of Learning and Scholarship, Prof. Viktoria Goddard.

The purpose of gatekeeper approval is:

- to ensure that student doctors are not overwhelmed by requests to take part in research studies, and that any studies that are approved are distributed fairly, via agreed mechanisms;
- to ensure that any research that involves students is high quality, i.e. asks questions which follow methodologically and does not repeat studies that the School already has the information on, which would not be a productive use of participants' time;
- to ensure that any results from the research undertaken would not result in reputational damage to the Medical School and therefore the MBChB programme that it awards, either deliberately or inadvertently.

Gatekeeper approval for any study *must* be agreed prior to moving to stage 2.

Please note that given the volume of requests received, it can take up to 2 weeks for these requests to be considered. Gatekeeper approval should therefore not be sought under time-pressure to complete a research project, as it is highly unlikely that this and appropriate ethical approval can be achieved in under a month.

How to Apply for Gatekeeper Approval

Students are requested to email the Vice Dean of Learning and Scholarship, with the following information:

- Project title and research question
- Research instrument (survey / interview / focus group questions)
- Indication of which year groups would be involved and desired start and end date of research
- Name of project supervisor(s)

Email address: Viktoria.Goddard@liverpool.ac.uk

Stage 2: University Ethical Approval

All Universities are required by law to have ethical approval panels, to ensure oversight of all research that takes place under the university's name. This includes asking questions to students or staff; ethics panels must ensure that research is not liable to upset or offend, and that researchers themselves are protected and not unsafe in undertaking the research.

You are advised *not to proceed* to this stage if you have not received approval at stage 1.

How to Apply for University Ethical Approval

Ethical approval can be applied for using the university's on-line form on the intranet. The link is [here](#). Note that students must be logged on via to the University website to access the link.

Student researchers also need a named supervisor who is a member of staff at the University of Liverpool. This supervisor has responsibility for signing off the project.

Once the application has been considered, the applicant will be notified via email.

Once Stage 1 and 2 Approvals have been received

Once a student has *both* gatekeeper approval and ethical approval, the research recruitment material (survey link or advert on how to sign up) can be circulated via the weekly MBChB Bulletin, which is sent to each year group. Please note that the MBChB News team will always check to see if a survey has been given appropriate approvals before circulation. Due to the volume of requests received to circulate research projects, we do not permit individual emails to be sent out to students regarding these. The volume of requests also means that we occasionally need to spread out the research requests across a number of bulletins; please factor this into your planning for your project.

When Ethical Approval has been given by another University

Occasionally gatekeeper approval may be given to research that has been given ethical approval at another University, or via the NHS ethical approval processes. This approval is given at the discretion of the gatekeeper and the senior team at the School of Medicine, upon sight of the ethical approval details, taking into account the purpose of the research, the amount of studies currently active in the programme and any likely adverse effects on the student body (for example, studies may not be circulated if the School feels that they are about a topic which may upset individuals, groups or cohort). If you are unsure whether a study that you may be involved in requires additional ethical approval, please contact the Vice Dean of Learning and Scholarship via email.

Undertaking non-University based research

A lot of students also choose to get involved in research at some point during their studies which is led by supervisors they have met on placement. This might be some research with existing data or patients, audit or evaluations of service. In order to ensure that you have the right approvals (including the right insurance and legal cover) in place to protect you should anything go wrong with the research, we ask that you notify the School when you intend to get involved in *any* research supervised externally. Please email the details of the project, the supervisor and the site the research it will be based at to the Vice Dean of Learning and

Scholarship. Usually, this information is simply recorded on a database, however if we have any questions or clarifications about the research we will let you know.

Undertaking research as part of an intercalated degree

Many students choose to intercalate as part of their studies, either at Liverpool or at another UK institution. There is often a research component as part of these degrees, and intercalating students often want to conduct research with Liverpool students. Please contact the Vice Dean of Learning and Scholarship BEFORE submitting any ethical approval application to your host institution to ensure we will be able to accommodate any such project, as given the number of requests we receive to recruit students for research this is not always feasible for students based outside of the MBChB programme.

Email address: Viktoria.Goddard@liverpool.ac.uk



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Contact details for all teams and individual staff can be found on the [School website](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/medicine/contact-us/email/).
[www.liverpool.ac.uk/medicine/contact-us/email/].