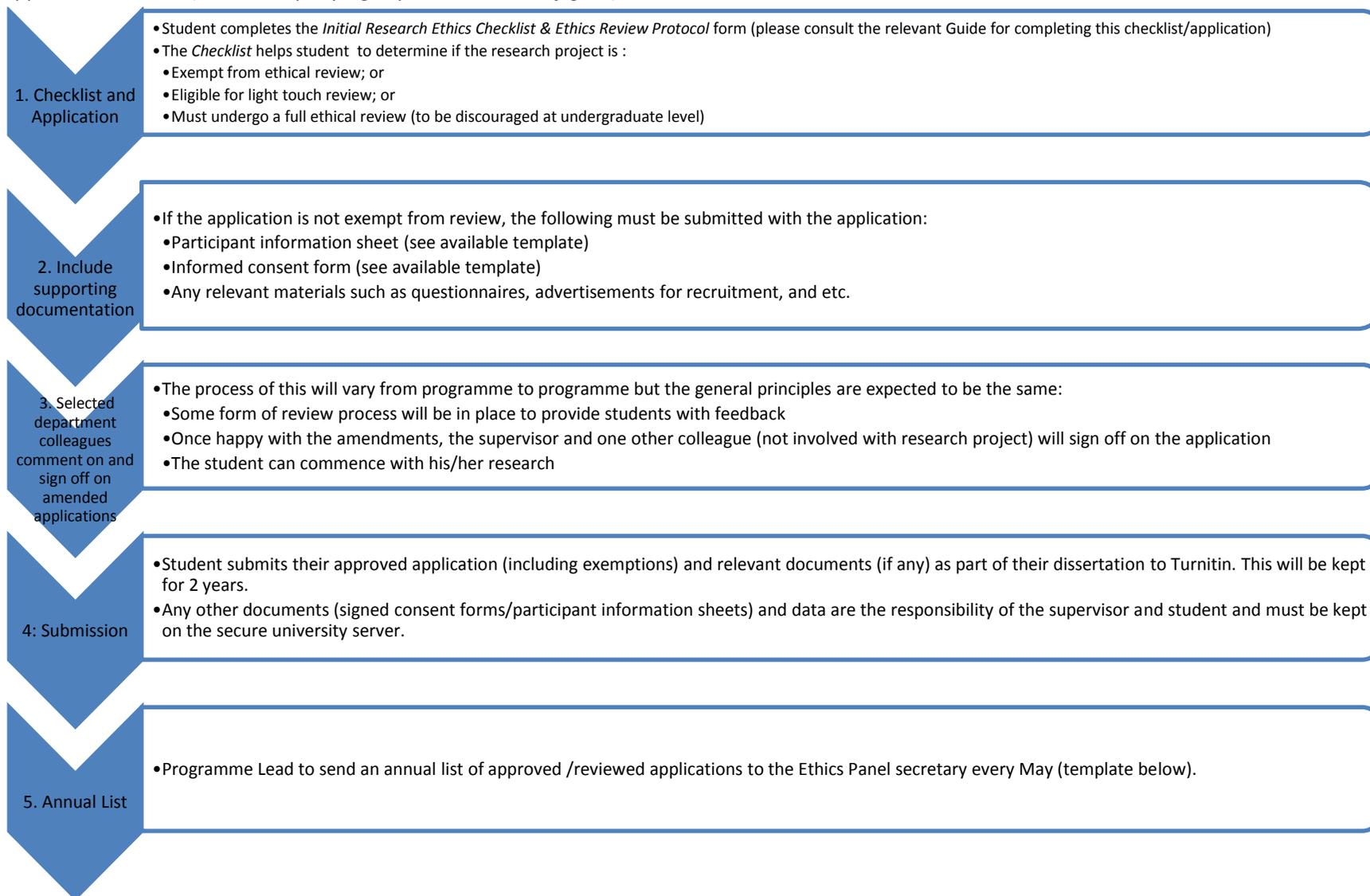**Undergraduate Research Projects/Generic Module Research**

Ethics Approval Process/Standard Operating Procedures

1. The processes described here apply to undergraduate (UG) research projects or taught postgraduate (PGT) research projects. Generic module research is dealt with separately in point 5 below.

2. The purpose for having a standard process is:
   i.   To ensure consistency across Programmes in the Ethics approval process
   ii.   To guide Programme teams who are responsible for evaluating their students' research projects for ethical issues
      -   please note that the practice of undergraduate/taught postgraduate research projects being reviewed by Programme teams [in whatever configuration they may take] will continue

3. This document does not replace the University Research Ethics Policy, which should be consulted if in doubt. The University Research Ethics Panel is also available for consultation and there is guidance on the website to accompany the [Initial Research Ethics Checklist & Ethics Review Protocol](1) (https://www.marjon.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research/pgr-dashboard/).

4. With regard to UG/PGT research projects, time is often of the essence and there is usually little time left for a full ethics review once the student has settled on a topic for research. However, ethics review is essential for any research undertaken because it not only protects the potential participants but also the (student) researcher. We suggest some ways to address this issue:
   i.   Supervisors steer their dissertation students away from high-risk projects so that a light-touch review or exemption can be applied for. Students could either propose their own topic or colleagues (Programme Leads/potential supervisors/Module Leads) could consult with each other in advance and advertise a list of topics falling into general areas that staff would be willing to supervise and that students can choose from.
   ii.   In the (exceptional) event the dissertation student is determined to carry out a particular project that would require full review *and* is deemed to be competent to carry out such research, the supervisor and student need to be aware of the time it can take to approve such applications and to make the appropriate arrangements so that the student has plenty of time to undergo the review process

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[1] Please note that the forms may be updated on an annual basis, depending on feedback received over the year. Please ensure your students have the most up-to-date versions. If the location of these forms changes, an announcement will be made on the Staff News.

5. With regard generic module research/coursework research – this refers to cases where the module requires some kind of data collection from human participants. In such cases, Module Leads are advised:

    - If the collection of data forms part of the training that the student must undergo as part of his/her degree AND the data will not be used as research data then research ethics approval is *not* required. An example of this includes Sports Science students collecting heart rate data to analyse as part of their training on how to gather and interpret such data. It is the Module Lead's responsibility to ensure (i) that data are stored on the secure university network while still in use; (ii) that data are destroyed securely when no longer in use; (iii) informed consent should be sought from participants; (iv) that health and safety or lab procedures are adhered to at all times. GDPR should be kept in mind at all times with regard any personal data.

    - If there is intention to use data collected as part of a module assignment as research data and to potentially publish such data (this could happen, for example, in some programmes such as Psychology or Linguistics), the Module Leader is encouraged to apply for a generic ethics approval for the assigned project <u>in advance</u> of the module. This application will go to the Panel, either via the light touch process or for a full review depending on the nature of the research.

Application Process (see accompanying explanation below figure)

1. Checklist and Application
- Student completes the *Initial Research Ethics Checklist & Ethics Review Protocol* form (please consult the relevant Guide for completing this checklist/application)
- The *Checklist* helps student to determine if the research project is :
  - Exempt from ethical review; or
  - Eligible for light touch review; or
  - Must undergo a full ethical review (to be discouraged at undergraduate level)

2. Include supporting documentation
- If the application is not exempt from review, the following must be submitted with the application:
  - Participant information sheet (see available template)
  - Informed consent form (see available template)
  - Any relevant materials such as questionnaires, advertisements for recruitment, and etc.

3. Selected department colleagues comment on and sign off on amended applications
- The process of this will vary from programme to programme but the general principles are expected to be the same:
  - Some form of review process will be in place to provide students with feedback
  - Once happy with the amendments, the supervisor and one other colleague (not involved with research project) will sign off on the application
  - The student can commence with his/her research

4: Submission
- Student submits their approved application (including exemptions) and relevant documents (if any) as part of their dissertation to Turnitin. This will be kept for 2 years.
- Any other documents (signed consent forms/participant information sheets) and data are the responsibility of the supervisor and student and must be kept on the secure university server.

5. Annual List
- Programme Lead to send an annual list of approved /reviewed applications to the Ethics Panel secretary every May (template below).

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Explanatory notes to accompany Application Process diagram above

Step 1: Students and/or staff applying for ethical approval for potential dissertation topics or for their module should complete the *Initial Research Ethics Checklist & Ethics Review Protocol* form

- a. The Checklist will determine whether:
- i. the project is exempt from review
  - if it is, then Sections 1 to 9 of the form should be completed by the student and co-signed by the student's supervisor and another member academic staff not involved in the student's research

- ii. the project qualifies for a light-touch review
  - this must be supported by the Risk Matrix in the Application Form confirming that the project is no more than minimal risk (i.e. in the unshaded areas of the matrix, see item 11 in the Application Form)
  - if the project is in the light touch review category the reviewing panel or colleagues responsible (whatever is the arrangement at that Department) must meet and discuss the project
  - the the *Initial Research Ethics Checklist & Ethics Review Protocol* form should be completed by the student and co-signed by the student's supervisor and another member academic staff not involved in the student's research

- iii. the project needs a full review
  - **this should be discouraged if possible** given the time constraints that undergraduates face. Students should be encouraged to rethink their project so that the risk associated with it decreases
  - in those exceptional cases where a project requires full or scholarly review, the application will be forwarded to the University Research Ethics Panel. The undergraduate should be made aware that the Panel meets at pre-determined times of the year and that delays may be inevitable.

Step 2: Relevant documentation

   a. Students whose research projects require a review will need to submit any relevant documentation (e.g. advertisements for participants), a participant information sheet and a consent form (please see the Checklist for details). These must also be reviewed along with the application.

Step 3: Review

   a. This can take several forms, depending on current processes; it could range from supervisors conferring with another independent colleague to the Programme Lead working with two other colleagues on a voluntary basis, or an actual rotating panel. Our aim is not to change current processes but the expectation is that there will be general principles that all the forms of review will adhere to:

        i.   Some form of review process will be in place to provide students with feedback

        ii. Students are given the opportunity to amend their applications. Once happy with the amendments, the supervisor and one other colleague (not involved with the research project) will sign off on the application

        iii. The student can then commence with his/her research after this

   b. There are four possible outcome categories:

        i.   Accept

        ii. Accept, subject to changes to be checked by supervisor

        iii. Accept, subject to changes to be subsequently checked by the programme team reviewing the applications (if applicable), or counter-signatory[2]

        iv. Reject

Step 4: Submission

   a. Student submits their approved application (including exemptions) and relevant documents (if any) as part of their dissertation to Turnitin. This will be kept for 2 years. Please note students may need to scan the signature page at the end of the application.

   b. Any other documents (signed consent forms/participant information sheets) and data are the responsibility of the supervisor and student and must be kept on the secure university server or in a secure location. Supervisors and students are reminded that any data or findings collected are usually owned by the university.

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[2] In the event major changes are required, or at the request of the counter-signatory

Step 5: Annual List

a. The Programme Lead must send a list of all applications seen in an academic year at the end of every academic year (May) to the University Research Ethics Panel secretary for auditing purposes. The list must indicate the name of the student, the name of the project, period of approval and whether the application was exempt or went through a light-touch review. The following table heading is recommended:

Student Name	Project Title	Period of Approval	Exemption/Light Touch Review/Full (forwarded to University Ethics Panel)