

## PROCEDURE: REQUESTS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

### **Context**

The University, the Students Union, and individual staff members of staff occasionally receive research participation requests from other institutions, their staff and students. These requests are normally associated with distributing online survey links to students and staff. There are concerns that the research being carried out may not conform to the levels of ethical scrutiny at Northumbria University; personal data collected from online surveys is not held in a manner which is compliant with the Data Protection Act; University members may become over-burdened with requests to take part in research; and there are no processes in place to ensure consistency when dealing with research participation requests.

This paper suggest guidelines to follow when considering whether and how to distribute research requests to University members via email, and goes on to highlight best practice when using University related social media tools for posting or forwarding links.

The University should only consider distribution via email of requests where

1. The request is from a member of academic or research staff, or a post-graduate research student, or from another University Service department
2. It is a time of year that the University and Students Union have not identified as being 'high email traffic' periods, such as the first two weeks of the University year, and Survey Time
3. It is demonstrated that the piece of research has gained ethical approval from the host University or institution

### **Process**

- a) Requests that do not meet points 1 and 2 should be rejected by the member of staff or service that receives them.
- b) Requests made to Faculty staff should be forwarded to the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Director for review. Requests made to Service staff should be forwarded to the Faculty Ethics Director with which they are associated (see Appendix below). The Faculty Research Ethics Director will ensure that point 3 is met.
- c) If the research request includes staff and students from more than one Faculty, the receiving Faculty Research Ethics Director should consult and inform the others of the proposed decision. If there is disagreement among the Research Directors about the circulation of request, then normally the request should be rejected.

- d) The staff member to whom the request was made is informed of the decision, and arranges for either the distribution of the request, or responds to the external institution noting the reason for rejection.
- e) The research link sent to possible participants should make it clear that
  - The research is being carried out by an external institution
  - Northumbria University will not hold the data
  - Northumbria University will/will not have a copy of the results and associated reports
  - The Faculty Research Ethics Directors agree that the research meets the ethical standards of the University

Decisions to forward requests must primarily be made on ethical grounds, but discretion should be taken where the Ethics Director have concerns about the methodological rigour of the research.

### ***Social Media and external research requests***

Care should be taken when using University 'badged' social media accounts to forward, share or re-post research requests from outside organisations. Staff managing accounts should take into consideration points 1 to 3, and ideally, requests which are linked to official Northumbria University accounts should go through the same processes as for email requests.

Individual members of staff social media accounts cannot be subject to the same processes, but staff should consider the impact on their own and the University's reputation when forwarding requests to take part in unethical research.

**Appendix**

**Alignment of University Services to Faculty Research Ethics Committees for Ethics Approvals**

Academic Registry	Health and Life Sciences
Academic Services	Arts, Design and Social Sciences
Campus Services (excluding Sport)	Engineering and Environment
Finance and Planning	Business and Law
Human Resources	Business and Law
International Development	Health and Life Sciences
IT Services	Engineering and Environment
Marketing	Business and Law
Research and Business Services	Health and Life Sciences
Sport	Health and Life Sciences
Vice-Chancellor's Office	As per appropriate discipline

Agreed by Research Ethics Committee on 19 March 2014