

Part 3: Research Regulations

1.14.1 Section 1 – Research Ethics Code of Practice

Introduction

1. The University is committed to good practice in research and scholarly activity, which demands that research is conducted in accordance with agreed ethical principles. This policy sets out the ethical principles the University expects all researchers to adhere to and that will be used in approving all research conducted under the auspices of the University. Other documents, which together constitute the University's research ethics framework include:
 - Guidance for Research Ethics Approval
 - Constitution and terms of reference for the Ethics Committee
 - University Health and Safety policy
 - University Data Processing Policy
 - University Diversity Framework
 - University's Disciplinary policies (for staff and students, as appropriate)

Respect for persons, justice and beneficence

2. The University accepts that the principles of respect for persons, justice, and beneficence are fundamental in the conduct of ethical research.
3. Research in many fields often involves the participation of persons other than the researchers. These individuals have the right to be autonomous, self-determined and free to make their own choices and decisions. Respect for persons recognises the human rights of participants involved, directly or indirectly, in research and obliges researchers to avoid diminishing these rights in any way. Respect for persons requires researchers to take special care when their research involves vulnerable persons.
4. The principle of justice obliges the researcher to balance the risks and benefits of participation in research. The risks to any person participating in research must be weighed against any potential benefits to the participants or the researchers, and also to society, of the knowledge gained.
5. Beneficence is the principle of doing good in the widest sense. It requires researchers to serve the interests and well-being of others. It prohibits the researcher from doing or permitting foreseeable harm as a consequence of participation in research activity. Beneficence subsumes the principle of non-maleficence, which is the principle of doing no harm in the widest sense.

Principles

6. The University is aware that many bodies have developed and disseminated principles of ethical research, guided by the principles of respect for persons, justice and beneficence. The principles presented below are owed to the RESPECT project, which was funded by the European Commission's Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme, to draw up professional and ethical guidelines for the conduct of socio-economic research (<http://www.respectproject.org/main/index.php>).
7. These ethical principles provide a useful point of reference both for the University in approving research projects conducted under its auspices and for researchers preparing

research projects. In applying the principles, researchers are recommended to review the additional resource material published by the project at the URL provides above.

8. The Principles the University adopts are:

- a. the research aims of any study should both benefit society and minimise social harm;
- b. researchers should endeavour to balance professional integrity with respect for national and international law;
- c. researchers should endeavour to ensure that research is commissioned and conducted with respect for, and awareness of, gender differences;
- d. researchers should endeavour to ensure that research is commissioned and conducted with respect for all groups in society, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion and culture;
- e. researchers should endeavour to ensure that research is commissioned and conducted with respect for under-represented social groups and that attempts are made to avoid their marginalisation or exclusion;
- f. researchers should endeavour to ensure that the concerns of relevant stakeholders and user groups are addressed;
- g. researchers should endeavour to ensure that an appropriate research method is selected on the basis of informed professional expertise;
- h. researchers should endeavour to ensure that the research team has the necessary professional expertise and support;
- i. researchers should endeavour to ensure that the research process does not involve any unwarranted material gain or loss for any participants;
- j. researchers should endeavour to ensure factual accuracy and avoid falsification, fabrication, suppression or misinterpretation of data.
- k. researchers should endeavour to reflect on the consequences of research engagement for all participants, and attempt to alleviate potential disadvantages to participation for any individual or category of person.
- l. researchers should endeavour to ensure that reporting and dissemination are carried out in a responsible manner;
- m. researchers should endeavour to ensure that methodology and findings are open for discussion and peer review;
- n. researchers should endeavour to ensure that any debts to previous research as a source of knowledge, data, concepts and methodology should be fully acknowledged in all outputs
- o. researchers should endeavour to ensure that participation in research is voluntary;
- p. researchers should endeavour to ensure that decisions about participation in research are made from an informed position;
- q. researchers should endeavour to ensure that all data is treated with appropriate confidentiality and anonymity;
- r. researchers should endeavour to ensure that research participants are protected from undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment, or psychological or other harm.

9. These principles do not override a researcher's obligations to adhere to the research ethics frameworks of any PSRB to which they belong. The University's aim is not to prescribe, but to encourage researchers to think through the ethical implications of their research systematically and reflectively.

Ethical research: Code of practice

10. Where a specific field of inquiry has adopted a particular code of practice for the conduct of ethical research or a researcher belongs to a professional organisation or society that requires compliance with its published code of practice, then researchers are encouraged to

adhere to the standards in that field of inquiry or profession. Other researchers are recommended to refer to the RESPECT Code of Practice for Socio-Economic Research.

11. The RESPECT Code of Practice covers the upholding of professional standards, compliance with law and the avoidance of social and personal harm. The authors recognise that these themes are interconnected and may interfere with each other or even come into conflict in certain situations. To aid judgement in balancing them the RESPECT website draws on prior research to provide material designed to help researchers navigate such dilemmas.