

Research Ethics Policy

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VERSION 3

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1. Purpose

1.1 The University Centre Calderdale College is committed to supporting engagement with research activity. This document sets out the principles underpinning ethical research conduct at the University Centre Calderdale College (UCCC). It covers the University Centre's expectations regarding ethical review and approval.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Research ethics can be viewed as a set of moral principles underpinning the planning and conduct of research, dissemination and publication of outcomes, protection of participants and storage and disposal of materials.
- 2.2. The College is committed to ethical practice and recognises the centrality of ethics in all aspects of the research process for staff and students. Ethical approval procedures help supervisors, students and staff doing research to identify and address relevant ethical issues. In undertaking research degree studies, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct, in line with College values. Where staff are conducting research on behalf of themselves or the College, the same principles apply. The integrity of work forms part of the expectations of conducting research for a degree or other purpose.
- 2.3. To uphold research integrity, researchers should aim for:
 - 2.3.1. **Honesty** in all aspects of the conduct of research
 - 2.3.2. **Accountability** and **rigour** in the conduct of research
 - 2.3.3. **Fairness** and **courtesy** when dealing with others
 - 2.3.4. **Good stewardship** of resources and ideas of others

3. Definition of Research

- 3.1. A working definition of research is set out in Annex C of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions* (2012, p48):

Definition of research for the REF

1. For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.
2. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.
3. It includes research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports.

- 3.2. The Frascati Manual (2015)¹ definition of research and experimental development (R&D) includes three activities: basic research, applied research and experimental development:

Type of research	Definition
Basic Research	Experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view.
Applied Research	Original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific, practical aim or objective.
Experimental Development	Systematic work, drawing on knowledge gained from research and practical experience and producing additional knowledge, which is directed to producing new products or processes or to improving existing products or processes. ²

4. Research Ethics Policy

- 4.1. The University Centre and the College recognise the importance of maintaining public confidence in the ethical standards of approved research conducted by its staff and students. This Policy contributes to the promotion of scholarly ethics across the curriculum, setting standards for an ethical culture of respect and dignity throughout the research process in line with University Centre and College values.
- 4.2. The College requires that research projects conducted by staff and students within the institution and in wider community align with the wider principles enshrined in UK legislation such as Equality Act 2010³, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018⁴, Freedom of Information Act 2000⁵ and relevant professional, regulatory, statutory or learned society requirements⁶.
- 4.3. All research conducted under the *aegis* of the University Centre and College is subject to ethical scrutiny and requires the ethical approval procedure to be completed.

5. Research Ethics Principles

- 5.1. The core principles of research ethics date back to the Aristotelian concept of 'eudemonia' or 'good living' and are commonly summed in the two terms of 'beneficence' (do good) and 'non-maleficence' (do no harm).⁷

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/frascati-manual.htm>

² Information in the table adapted from paragraph 2.9, page 45, OECD (2015) *Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development*, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/frascati-manual.htm>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36>

⁶ King's College Research Policy and Guidelines London

www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/about/index.aspx)

⁷ Open University Research Principles (2019) <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics>

- 5.2. For the purposes of this policy, a distinction has been made between human participants and human subjects. **Participants** and **subjects** are the people who the researcher selects for their study.
- 5.2.1. **Participants** are usually in qualitative research. A participant takes a more active role in the research process than a subject, providing information, and answering questions,
 - 5.2.2. **Subjects** are the people of researcher's experiment (subjected to research) - usually quantitative research.
- 5.3. In the 21st Century, four traditional ethical rules are applied in conducting research across disciplines: confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and sensitivity. The Academy of Social Sciences' Five Ethics Principles for Social Science Research are reflected in the BERA (2024)⁸ ethical guidelines:
- 5.3.1. aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm
 - 5.3.2. respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values, and dignity of individuals, groups and communities
 - 5.3.3. act with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose
 - 5.3.4. have regard to their social and professional responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research
- 5.4. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, value and quality. Research is a form of enquiry and aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory. This does not normally extend to general coursework assignments (unless it is clearly identified as a requirement in course documentation) but does apply to final year undergraduate dissertations or final major projects. Educational researchers are expected to identify relevant ethical issues, including listening to those in the research context/site(s), stakeholders and sponsors. This means that ethical decision-making becomes an ongoing and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise. The interests of research participants should be considered at all stages of research projects ensuring that:
- 5.4.1. participants are no worse off as a result of their participation in research;
 - 5.4.2. participants are able to withdraw from the project;
 - 5.4.3. the interests of children, vulnerable adults and other vulnerable groups are given specific consideration;
 - 5.4.4. participants are not subjected to intrusion, distress, personal embarrassment or harm;
 - 5.4.5. data is stored securely and privacy protected.
- 5.5. Issues of anonymity of data and results should be fully considered and any issues relating to personal disclosure or identification discussed with participants, with consent explicitly gained. Anyone proposing research should ensure that the research methodology is appropriate and takes account of ethical principles in applications for ethical approval.

⁸British Educational Research Association (2024) <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024-online>

6. Research Ethics Procedure

- 6.1. This policy and procedure applies to all researchers, from students undertaking undergraduate dissertation modules, to staff conducting postgraduate and postdoctoral research, or research for other purposes. Research undertaken by College or University Centre staff as part of their day-to-day teaching or practice does not require specific ethical approval. However, all research should be carried out in an ethical manner, to consider the moral implications and ensure research conducted is within UK legislation.
- 6.2. Students of the University Centre will be required to submit an Ethics Approval Form (see Appendix iii.) for all dissertation, extended research projects or postgraduate research projects, and any other submission identified as requiring this in the related course documentation. Staff conducting research on behalf of the University Centre and College will be advised whether or not to submit an Ethics Approval Form and should seek guidance where necessary. The Research Ethics Panel has responsibility for approving all research, including **high risk** and **low risk** research projects (see Appendix ii.: Research Ethics Panel Terms of Reference).
- 6.3. Undergraduate students are usually required to complete research proposals and applications for ethical approval as part of their undergraduate studies in taught research methodologies modules. Ethical approval must be granted prior to carrying out any data collection. At undergraduate level the scope of any planned research should be limited to **low risk** projects.

Low Risk

- 6.4. **Low risk** proposals include:
- 6.4.1. Desk based research, such as gathering data from existing resources such as audits, quality assurance, and library research, based on literary and professional sources
 - 6.4.2. Service evaluations are normally low risk, but there are occasions where this may not be the case, for example in NHS related matters
 - 6.4.3. Research involving human participants
 - 6.4.4. A project that is part of a student's ongoing work (for example in a school or industrial placement) where adequate supervision and advice are available; and provided that DBS procedures have been completed where required and the appropriate clearance given.

Low risk will be divided according to the following two sub-categories:

Low Risk A	Low Risk B
Desk based research	Research involving human participants

- 6.5. Principle 12: 'Choice' of The UK policy framework for health and social care research 2017⁹, outlines that:

⁹ UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (updated 2023)
<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/>

Research participants are afforded respect and autonomy, taking account of their capacity to understand. Where there is a difference between the research and the standard practice that they might otherwise experience, research participants are given information to understand the distinction and make a choice, unless a research ethics committee agrees otherwise. Where participants' explicit consent is sought, it is voluntary and informed. Where consent is refused or withdrawn, this is done without reprisal.

6.6. Any project involving human participants (this includes collecting data about people's opinions) is classified as **low risk** and will require approval to ensure that the research is conducted within the approved guidelines given. The researcher and module tutor or, where allocated, their supervisor should undertake an initial ethical assessment. If the proposed project does **not** involve any of the following then the proposed project may be classified as **low risk**:

- human subjects (*not participants*)
- animals
- plants
- fieldwork
- microorganisms
- non-sustainable materials
- land-owned by others
- lone working
- commercial sponsorship
- biotechnology
- laboratory chemicals or pesticides.

High Risk

6.7. Undergraduate research involving **human subjects** will almost certainly not be granted approval as it would be classified as **high risk**. The risk involved should be weighed against the potential value of the research. The scale of an undergraduate dissertation/project is such that it is unlikely to have wide validity, plus there would be an additional requirement to gain full ethical approval from other relevant external bodies and learned societies responsible for overseeing research integrity (for example, the NHS, or HM custodial services).

Approval Process

The approval process is as follows:

- 6.8. Students are required to submit an Ethics Approval Form giving complete details of the research project's aims and methods in order for the project to be considered for ethical clearance. Students should also include a copy of their research proposal, a participant information form, and any other relevant document(s) so they may be referred to by the panel during consideration of the request for approval.
- 6.9. For undergraduate research the tutor or supervisor should confirm whether they have classified the project in sub-category Low Risk A or Low Risk B. Any undergraduate proposal classified as high risk will not be approved by the Research Ethics Panel and will be referred. The Panel will consider all proposals to confirm:

- 6.9.1. Whether or not it agrees with the classification of the proposed research activity as low risk;
- 6.9.2. That, where classified as Low Risk A, that it does not involve human participants;
- 6.9.3. That, where classified as Low Risk B, that all ethical considerations have been identified and their effective mitigation outlined.
- 6.9.4. The Panel will consider the details, ethical considerations and their proposed mitigation as outlined in the Ethics Approval Form and will determine as follows:
 - 6.9.4.1. The proposal is approved and may go ahead
 - 6.9.4.2. The proposal cannot be approved and is referred back to the proposer

- 6.10. If a research ethical proposal cannot be approved and is referred, feedback will be given to the proposer and a resubmission will be required for reconsideration and ratification via Chair's Action. Following feedback from the panel, supervisors will provide guidance on resubmission.

- 6.11. No practical research should be commenced until approval has been given. Failure to obtain ethical approval could invalidate submitted work.

Approval of Ethical Research Approval Applications

Project Description	Undergraduates	Staff
Low Risk A: Desk based research	Required	Required
Low Risk B: Research involving human participants	Required	Required
High Risk: Research involving human subjects	Not permitted	Required
High Risk: Complex Projects including occluded and covert	Not permitted	Required
High Risk: Covert Projects	Not permitted	Required

7. Research Misconduct

- 7.1. Students engaging in any form of research misconduct, such as falsifying data, misrepresenting results or plagiarism, would be referred for investigation under the Unfair Practice Policy and Procedure. Allegations which are upheld may result in withdrawal. If Unfair Practice is proven after a Dissertation or Research Project has been submitted for examination, a penalty will apply.

- 7.2. Taking personal responsibility for the conduct of research studies and working within wider ethical codes of conduct can help to maintain the integrity of data, protect those involved in research activities, and avoid plagiarism in all aspects of submitted or published work^{10, 11}

¹⁰ Ethical Principles for Research with Human Participants (April 2019) <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>.

¹¹ This document developed by L Lawrence Wilkes for Calderdale College University Centre (July 2019)

Appendix i. Learned Societies' Codes of Research Ethics

British Association for Early Childhood Education (2011) Code of Ethics. Available at:
<https://early-education.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Code-of-Ethics.pdf>

British Educational Research Association (2024) Ethical Guidelines. Available at:
<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024>

British Psychological Society (2021) Code of Human Research Ethics. Available at:
<https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/bps-code-human-research-ethics>

British Sociological Association (BritSoc 2017) Statement of Ethical Practice. Available at:
https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

Economic and Social Research Council (2022) Framework for Research Ethics. Available at:
<https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/framework-for-research-ethics/>

Ethical Research involving Children Charter Available at: <https://childethics.com/charter/>

Health and Care Professions Council (2024) Guidance on conduct and ethics for students.
Available at: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/resources/guidance/guidance-on-conduct-and-ethics-for-students.pdf>

King's College London Research Policy and Guidelines. Available at:
www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/about/index.aspx

NSPCC Research with children: ethics, safety and promoting inclusion (2023) Available at:
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/research-with-children-ethics-safety-promoting-inclusion>

Open University (2024) Research Principles. Available at:
<https://research.open.ac.uk/environment/ethics#:~:text=The%20Open%20University%20is%20committed,the%20highest%20contemporary%20ethics%20standards.>

UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research (2023) Available at:
<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/>

Appendix ii. **Research Ethics Panel Terms of Reference**

The Research Ethics Panel will convene to make decisions on the ratification of research proposals at the University Centre. The Panel will receive an Ethics Approval Form for each proposal, along with a copy of the completed proposal, to consider whether sign-off should be given to research projects. Proposals for research must be completed and signed-off by the Panel prior to the commencement of any primary research activity and must include consideration of research ethics. For undergraduates, advice on how to approach ethical considerations will be part of the teaching and support given by tutors leading up to the submission of the proposal. The Ethics Approval Form outlines any ethical issues and their proposed mitigation; it is signed by both the student and the supervisor before it comes to the Research Ethics Panel.

1. Membership

1.1. The membership of the Research Ethics Panel shall be as follows:

- Chair - Deputy Principal, Quality, Curriculum Development and Student Experience (or nominee)
- Quality, Partnership and Learner Engagement Manager (or nominee)
- Applicable module leader or member of teaching staff responsible for countersigning the Ethics Approval Form

2. Quorum

2.1. All members must be present for the meeting to be quorate

3. Schedule

3.1. The Ethics Panel will convene a meeting as soon as practicable after Ethics Approval Forms have been submitted

3.2. Additional extraordinary meetings may be required, for example, if there are late submissions due to mitigating circumstances or legitimate resubmission opportunities.

4. Terms of Reference

The Ethics Panel will:

- 4.1. Receive copies of completed and signed Ethics Approval Forms for research activity;
- 4.2. Consider each proposal based on its risk-rating and whether all ethical considerations have been included and appropriate mitigation proposed;
- 4.3. Authorise requests for such research if it is deemed that all ethical considerations have been satisfactorily addressed through the Form and documentation;
- 4.4. Confirm the authorisation through the addition of the chair's signature to the Form;
- 4.5. Refer back a proposal where all ethical considerations are not deemed to have been satisfactorily addressed, and – for undergraduate students – where the proposal is deemed high risk. Where referred the panel will give feedback to the proposer with a resubmission opportunity, to be reconsidered and ratified via Chair's action;
- 4.6. Retain a register of all proposals received and their outcomes.

APPLICATION FORM FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITY APPROVAL

This form should be completed electronically. The boxes will expand as you type.

FAILURE TO GAIN ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR YOUR RESEARCH MEANS THAT YOUR PROJECT MAY NOT GO AHEAD

Section 1 – The Proposer			
Name		Programme	
ID Number		Academic Year	
Email Address		DBS check completed (give date)	
Module (if applicable)			

Section 2 – The Research
Title of proposed research project/study

Expected start date for the project		Expected end date for the project	
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Brief description of proposed activity and its objectives (e.g. numbers involved, research location/s). Be specific about any involvement of young people, or research around illegality or activity at the margins of the law:

Will this proposal involve any health and safety risks to yourself or others? (For example, lone working in potentially unsafe locations.) Is a formal Risk Assessment needed?

I confirm that my proposed project falls into category (please put an 'X' in the relevant box)

Low Risk A: Desk based research (if selected please omit Section 3; and go straight to Section 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low Risk B: Research involving human participants (Please complete Section 3 in full)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Section 3 – Ethical Issues

Ethical issues identified	How these will be addressed
Voluntary Informed Consent	
Openness and Disclosure	
Right to Withdraw	
Children, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults	

Incentives	
Detriment Arising from Participation in Research	
Privacy	
Disclosure	

Section 4 – Proposer Undertaking
<p>Checklist for proposer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you included a copy of your proposal? 2. Have you attached a draft of your Participant Information Form? 3. Does that Participant Information Form have the name and contact details of your Programme Leader or Supervisor on it? 4. Does that form clearly state why you are undertaking the research? (for example, that your research is part of your studies at the Calderdale College as part of an Open University Honours Degree)
I have read and understood (please insert the title of the relevant code(s) of research ethics from Appendix i.):

I hereby confirm that I will conduct my research in line with the guidelines indicated. I also confirm that I am proposing to undertake this research project in the manner described. I understand that no primary data collection should start until consent is granted. I understand that once consent is granted, I may not make any substantial amendments to this project without further consent – for example in widening or changing the participant group or significantly changing a questionnaire. I also understand that if I infringe the terms of this approval, I will be subject to a sanction. Where applicable, issues of professional suitability may be raised.

Signature of Researcher / Student:		Date:	
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Section 5 – Supervisor confirmation			
As supervising tutor for the proposal I confirm that this proposal for research falls into sub-category (please tick or put an 'X' in the relevant box):			
Low Risk A: Desk based research		Low Risk B: Research involving human participants	
High Risk: Involving human subjects; complex projects including occluded and covert; covert projects			
Signature of Supervisor:		Date:	
Authorisation:			
Authorising Signature:		Date:	