

RESEARCH GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS POLICY

Mission

The Institute of Education's mission is to pursue excellence in education and related areas of social science and professional practice. In undertaking this mission the Institute will adhere to the highest standards of academic rigour in all its work, be guided by a concern for truth and justice, and make a positive contribution to the development of individuals, institutions and societies facing the challenges of change.

High standards

In accordance with this statement of purpose, the Institute of Education is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of integrity and probity in the conduct of research by both staff and students, and to ensuring that the conduct of research and the dissemination of the results of research are both truthful and fair. The great majority of its research involves human participants, and the Institute is committed to protecting their interests and protecting them from the potential risks associated with research. The policy also covers the sharing of intellectual property (see also the Institute's *Code of Practice relating to Intellectual Property, Research Results and Computer Software*), the proper acknowledgement of help from others, plagiarism, equal opportunities (see also the Institute's *Equal Opportunities Policy* and *Race Equality Policy*), the duty to place the results of research in the public domain, and a commitment to high standards of academic conduct (see also the Institute's *Code of Practice for Enquiring into Allegations of Misconduct in relation to Academic, Research and Scientific Activities*).

As an organisation of international excellence, the Institute's research, teaching and consultancies are widespread, and students and staff reflect these international dimensions. While acknowledging that occasionally there may be conflict between the ethical guidelines which have been developed in the UK and those of the other cultures and countries reflected in the wide span of its work and influence, staff and students are committed at all times, to work sensitively to resolve possible dilemmas and conflicts ethically.

Professional Codes of Ethics

All staff at the Institute undertake to abide by the Code of Ethics of their relevant professional association (normally BERA, BPS or BSA). They are asked to state in writing the professional association or body to whose Code of Ethics they adhere, and a Register of this commitment is maintained in each Faculty. Commitment to a Code of Ethics will ensure that all research is conducted according to the following concerns:

- To respect the autonomy of individuals
- To avoid causing harm
- To treat people fairly
- To act with integrity
- To use resources as beneficially as possible

The implications of these principles are elaborated in the relevant Codes.

Ethical approval

Ethics review will be required for any activity conducted by staff or students that uses research methods to collect data from human participants, in order to ensure that the research conforms to the ethical standards expected by the Institute and to the code of ethical principles and standards to which it must explicitly affiliate. Where research has satisfied rigorous external requirements for ethical review, such as NHS MREC or

LREC approval, an internal review will not be required . All staff should complete the ethical approval form which is signed off by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Faculties and Departments are required to develop robust procedures for ensuring the ethical integrity of all student research (PGCE, MA, research degrees), with all student research involving human participants being reviewed prior to the beginning of data collection and the results of student ethics reviews being reported to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Where support departments undertake activities that could be considered research and that are outside of their normal activities, the Deputy Director of Research, Consultancy, and Knowledge Transfer should be consulted concerning appropriate ethics review processes.

All staff and students should be encouraged to write an information sheet for research participants, where appropriate, presenting the research in non-technical language, as part of good practice.

Implementation and oversight

The policy will be implemented by the Institute Research Governance and Ethics Committee which has responsibility and oversight for developing policy, for ensuring that there is adequate training in research ethics across the Institute, and for reviewing the procedures in place for ethical approval. Faculties and Departments have responsibility for ensuring that all research conducted by staff and students adheres to the highest standards of research governance and ethics, and that this is subject to ethical approval.

The Research Governance and Ethics Policy is published on the Institute website.

Committee structure

The Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC) reports to the Research, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer Committee and has responsibility for policy, overview, and training. Three Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) deal with the routine approvals of research proposals, and report annually to the RGEC.

(i) The Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC)

The Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC) is charged with sustaining an Institute-wide awareness of issues surrounding research governance¹.

The Committee is responsible for producing guidelines for the conduct of activities with implications for research governance, for providing a web based resource of information about best practice established in the Institute for dealing with issues of research ethics and governance, for overseeing the provision of appropriate training for those engaged in research and the support of research, and for those who conduct ethics review for the Institute RGEC and FRECs, and for ensuring that all Faculties and Departments have in place proper procedures for the consideration and conduct of activities with implications for research governance. The Committee will also consider and make judgments on research governance matters referred to it from Faculty Research Ethics Committees. The Committee's emphasis will be to advise, inform and support those carrying out research.

¹ Research Governance is aimed at continuous improvement of quality, and the reduction of unacceptable variations in research practice, through key standards in five domains (ethics, science, information, health and safety, and finance).

Membership and Responsibilities

Membership:

- The Assistant Director of Research, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer (or nominee with relevant expertise) (Chair)
- The Dean of the Doctoral School (or nominee)
- The Assistant Director of Learning and Teaching (or nominee)
- The Chair (or nominee) of each Faculty Research Ethics Committee
- Two students (nominated by the Students Union)
- Three lay members, at least one of whom is a lay member of Council (and at least one of whom is not)

Secretary: Research Ethics Coordinator

Responsibilities:

- To develop and review Institute policy and guidelines in consultation with Faculty Research Ethics Committees, Faculties and Departments.
- To consider annual reports from local committees on the management of research governance and ethical issues in research, and offering advice and making recommendations as appropriate on the operation of Faculty- and Department-level procedures.
- To develop and promote a resource of best practice guidelines, procedures and advice developed in Faculties and Departments for dealing with issues of research ethics and governance
- To oversee the provision of appropriate training for members and administrators of local committees.
- To oversee the provision of training in relation to research governance and ethics for members of the Institute engaged in research
- To consider and offer guidance on cases of uncertainty and in exceptional cases, to make decisions on cases which cannot be resolved by local committees
- To ensure consistency in standards and practice across FRECs
- To seek clarification from the Institute's external advisors or other expert bodies, as necessary, on matters of relevant policy and practice.
- To report annually to the Research, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer Committee on the operation of procedures for research governance and the ethical review of research with the Institute.
- To report to the Research, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer Committee on any outstanding difficulties in respect of research governance and the ethical review of research

The RGEC meets termly.

(ii) Faculty Research Ethics Committees

Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) are charged with implementing the Institute's policies and procedures in relation to research governance, ensuring that all research² carried out within Faculties and Departments is reviewed for ethical standards, and providing an annual report to the RGEC on their activities. These committees conduct ethics reviews of planned research³ conducted by all Institute staff and students.

The FRECs are constituted to represent a range of research interests and expertise in their membership, within each faculty, in recognition that while the same standards for ethical practice apply across all research conducted at the Institute, the system for ethics review must be sensitive to differences in research type, context and method.

The FRECs meet as often as required, and at least termly, keeping records of decisions taken, and other matters, and provide an annual report to the RGEC.

Membership and Responsibilities

Membership:

- Coordinator for Research, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer (or nominee) to act as chair
- At least 8 staff representatives drawn from Departments within the faculty, with at least one of these from each Department within the faculty
- Two student representatives
- One lay member
- Faculty Director of Doctoral Studies and other members of faculty staff as appropriate
- Extra members may be seconded as appropriate

Secretary: Faculty Research Manager (or nominee)

Responsibilities:

- To have operational responsibility for the implementation of the Institute's policies and procedures in relation to research governance and ethics.
- In conjunction with Departmental Research Committees, to review research governance requirements in its constituent Departments and recommend to the RGEC for its approval the procedures and policies it considers appropriate for managing research governance issues relevant to its particular research.
- To provide advice to staff, supervisors and students on good practice and the ethics of their research.
- To monitor and oversee the ethical propriety of research being carried out by staff and students in its constituent Departments.
- To determine the ethical propriety of research projects that are submitted to it.
- To implement review mechanisms for student projects that ensure that the research governance and ethics policy is applied in a manner appropriate to such projects.
- To report on an annual basis to the RGEC in a form stipulated by the RGEC, providing a summary of all reviewed projects; a report on the effectiveness of current practice and procedures in its constituent Schools/Units; a register of all

² This includes both research carried out by members of staff and that carried out by students

³ Ethical approval must be secured before research is carried out, but ethics review will not be required for research proposals that have not yet been funded/commissioned.

research-active staff and the professional Code of Ethics/Conduct to which they adhere

- To keep appropriate records of practices and decisions
- To keep abreast as appropriate of any advice / recommendations from relevant professional bodies and, where appropriate, advising the RGEC
- To refer cases to the RGEC that require decision or require advice/opinion from Senior Institute Officers and/or external advisors or other expert bodies as necessary. It is expected that referral to the RGEC for an appeal will be in exceptional circumstances only. The RGEC will not normally interfere with a local committee decision to require revisions to the project, such as to amend an information sheet or consent form. The RGEC is concerned with the general principles of natural justice, reasonableness and fairness of the decision made by the local committee.

A decision by any of the Institute's Research Ethics Committees to approve a research project does not imply an expert assessment of all possible ethical issues or of all possible dangers or risks involved nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which researchers must themselves have for all research which they carry out and for its effects on human subjects. The Institute's RGEC and FRECs address themselves to ethical matters and are dependent upon information supplied by the researcher. This information is expected to be properly researched, full, truthful and accurate. Failure to follow the Institute's guidance on ethical review of research may result in disciplinary action.

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