

Research Integrity and Ethics: Good Practice in Research
Postgraduate Researcher Development resource

Research Integrity and Ethics: Your research before data gathering

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[Image description: A person looking at a board].

After reviewing why Research Integrity is important and what does it mean, we will review how Research Integrity and ethics are core concepts in all the stages of your research (and afterwards), starting with the process before the data gathering.

Ethics are an integral part of all stages of research and throughout career.

Research Integrity in your research must be considered before the studies are conducted, and even designed. For example, thinking about your research: What are the implications of your research question? Have you thought through possible ethical implications of your research question?

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“Conflict of Interest is a situation in which a University Member has an Interest (defined below) which may compromise that University Member’s obligations to the University or to any other body with which the University has a relationship (for example a funding body), for instance if the Interest might provide an incentive to the University Member which affects their actions, or where the University Member has the opportunity to affect or influence a University decision. A Conflict of Interest includes perceived and potential as well as actual conflicts of interest. A perceived conflict of interest is one which a reasonable person would consider likely to compromise objectivity. A potential conflict of interest is a situation which could develop into an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

An Interest is a financial or non-financial interest to the University Member, or to a Connected Person

A Connected Person is anyone with whom the University Member has a relationship which is likely to appear, to a reasonable person, to influence the University Member’s objectivity. This includes, but is not limited to, the University Member’s close family, their partner and close personal friends”.

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[Image description: open books].

“Open research comprises openness throughout the research cycle, through collaborative working and sharing and making research methodology, software, code and equipment freely available online, along with instructions for using it. Open research includes making publications freely available online (open access), in addition to the underlying research data (open data).

Open access to research publications and data means that these are freely available to be viewed and downloaded by anybody with an internet connection, anywhere in the world, without having to log in or pay. Open access benefits individuals not affiliated with institutions that buy access to journal content, this can include researchers in developing countries, practitioners such as health workers, governments and members of the public (whose taxes helped to fund the research)”.



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I like to think of Open Research as our research being an open book. We can register all the steps of our study, and see how our journey has been. And also, we can share with others this journey and contribute to the scientific community.

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This is an example of the OSF registration portal. You can see the information that you need to provide in your pre-registration. You can see that you need to think about your variables, analysis, how you will recruit participants and so on.

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Another option is "Aspredicted"

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Worktribe is the platform where you must submit your study ethics. To access the system, visit <https://exeter.worktribe.com//> and log in using your university single sign-on (SSO) details. Most staff and PGRs/PGTs/UGs will have been set up with access automatically, but if you have any issues with logging in or need further guidance, please visit this site <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/secure/ethicssystemandtools/>

The Research Management System, powered by Worktribe, will help academic researchers and students to manage the full lifecycle of their research and its impact digitally.

This is an example of the portal. You can manage your ethics applications and reviews, and you will need to complete each application considering key information about your study (participants, analysis, how you will manage data, etc.). In this system, your supervisor is the one that can submit your application, so keep they updated with your process in your ethics application.

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The ethics application process is a key part of your PGR journey: When does a project require ethical approval? Always with all research involving: human participants, their data or tissue, and/or animals. This does not include clinical audit, service evaluation, literary or artistic criticism.

Researchers are expected to consider the environmental, political, social, religious, cultural and legal implications of their work. You can find more information at <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/cgr/researchethics/integrity/>

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When submitting your application, you need to upload different documents:

- Participant information (e.g. recruitment materials, information sheet, leaflet) and consent recording methods (e.g. signed consent form, researcher notes, audio): (a) Consider identification and recruitment processes and inclusion/exclusion criteria; (b) University PIS/consent form templates are GDPR compliant

Supporting documents must be in lay language and appropriate/helpful for audience e.g. can be video, audio, visual formats

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In some cases, you require extra ethical applications. Contact RE&G Office as early as possible if your research considers:

Her Majesty's Prison Service (offenders, including those on probation)
Ministry of Defense (serving military personnel and entitled dependents)
Ministry of Justice (research in a court setting)
Human Fertility and Embryology Authority
Health Research Authority (HRA)/MHRA
NHS patients, staff, facilities
Adult social care settings – including adults who lack capacity
Gene therapy (GTAC), ionising radiation (ARSAC), access to patient data without prior consent (CAG)

There is a lot of support available. You can find it in the university website, section research ethics (see links in the resource document).

References

Kara, H. (2022) *Research ethics: theory and practice*. National Centre for Research Methods online learning resource. Available at <https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/resources/online/all/?main&id=20591>