



Research Ethics

'Research ethics is a world-wide set of principles governing the way any research involving interaction between the researcher and other humans or human tissue or data relating to humans, is designed, managed and conducted. In preparing a research project, the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of human participants must at all times be considered, respected and safeguarded'

Research Integrity (Universities UK, 2012)

Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research

Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards

Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers

Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise

Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly

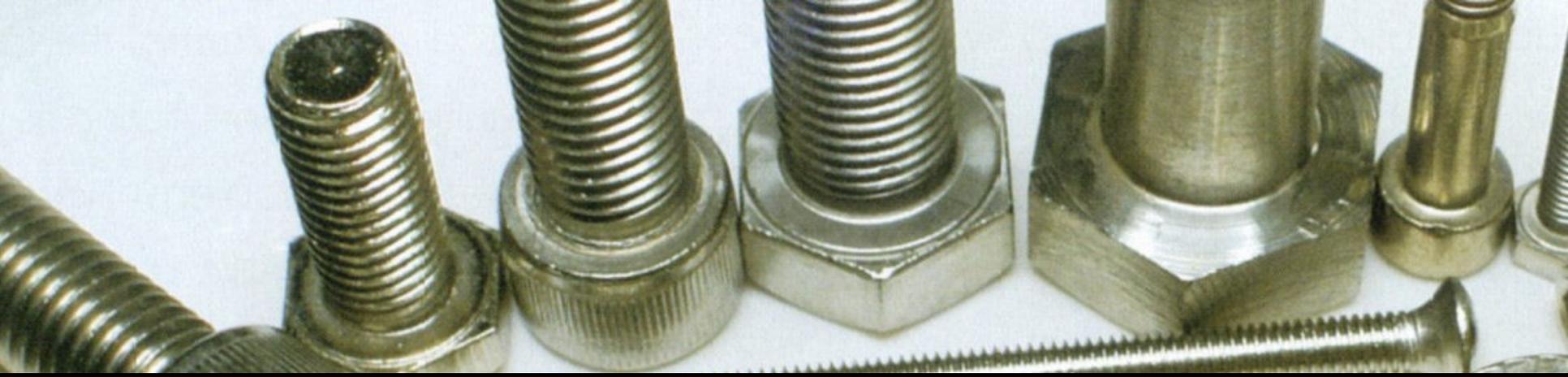
The principles of research ethics

- **Autonomy** - the participant must be free to take part in the research without coercion or penalty for not taking part; the participant must be free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without a threat of any adverse effect.
- **Beneficence** - the research must be worthwhile in itself and have beneficial effects that outweigh any risks; the methodology must be sound so that positive results will be yielded.
- **Non-maleficence** - any possible harm must be avoided or mitigated by robust precautions
- **Confidentiality** – the right of the participant and his/her personal data to remain unknown to all but the research team must be respected (unless the participant agrees otherwise).
- **Integrity** - the researcher must be open about any gains he or she makes from the research.



The background is a solid green color. It features several white abstract shapes: a large irregular shape at the top center, a smaller one on the left edge, and another at the bottom left. A pattern of small white dots is scattered across the green background, primarily concentrated around the white shapes.

Key Areas



concordat to support research integrity



UON aligns with the Universities UK (2012) [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and are committed to:

“maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research; ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards” (p.4).



**Research ethics code
and procedures
version 3.0**



UON (2021) [Research Ethics Code and Procedures](#) provides detailed guidance and regulations for researchers:

“It is a fundamental principle that staff and students engaged in research adopt a continuing personal commitment to act ethically” (p.4).

Informed
consent

Data
management

Care and
safeguarding

Confidentiality

Informed Consent (1)

- Informed Consent is often misinterpreted as merely obtaining an individual's signature on a form (or a "yes" response in a verbal consent process).
- Informed Consent is a *process* of education and decision-making that begins with the very first contact with a potential study subject (i.e. during recruitment).
- People approach volunteering for a study with preconceived ideas and life issues that may impede true informed consent. It is the research team's responsibility to identify and address these issues as part of the Informed Consent process.

Informed Consent (2)

- Some potential subjects may adopt a “Give me the form, I’ll just sign it” approach. However, the key points about a study should always be reviewed as part of the process.
- Some potential subjects may be reticent about asking questions (e.g. shy, do not want to appear “dumb,”))
- Avoid passive acceptance when a potential subject states s/he has no questions. To facilitate understanding, encourage a subject to repeat—in his/her own words—the key points about a study.

Data Management

Researchers must pay careful consideration to the handling, storage, dissemination and archiving of data during and after any research project. It is the responsibility of **the researcher** to ensure that data management is legal/ethical and aligned with the University of Northampton's Data Management Policy and GDPR/DPA Policy and Procedures.

Researchers will:

- keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained
- hold records securely in paper or electronic form
- make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others for reasonable periods after the completion of the research (data should normally be preserved for at least 10 years)
- manage data according to the research funder's data policy, best ethical practice and all relevant legislation
- wherever possible, deposit data permanently within a national collection or repository

Safeguarding

- Participants must be clearly informed, in advance, of any situations in which it may be necessary to break confidentiality.
- There is an expectation that researchers must report information salient to child protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults
- Researchers working with children and vulnerable adults outside the UK must include information about legal duties, and professional or context-specific expectations, around breaking confidentiality in their research context.
- This process should be explained to participants.

Protecting Confidentiality

- Share subject study data only with appropriate study team members.
- Keep signed consent forms and other documents containing identifiable data in a secured location.
- Encrypt and password-protect all identifiable data files – including all audio and/or video recordings.
- Keep memory sticks, laptops and other removable media secured when not in use.
- Keep participant names/study identification codes in a separate, secure location from all other study data.
- Additional confidentiality measures may also apply when studies are subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and other countries with their own data protection requirements.

Documentation

Risk assessment

Data management plan
(DMP)

Participant information
sheet (PIS)

Consent form for
participants

Additional documents (e.g.
questionnaires, interview
questions, invitation letter
to participants,
advertisements)

Recent issues (Faculty Ethics Committee)

Data protection
and data sharing

Further research
and publication

Clear
communication

Clarity of
research process

Informed
consent

Recent issues (Conducting Research)

Consent prior to interviews

Focus groups with all
consent forms

Direct information to ISII
from children and young
people

Storing data (i.e.
audio/transcripts/consent)

Responsibilities for ethical review at the University of Northampton.



University Research Ethics Committee (see sections 10.2 and 10.6.1)

- Maintains *Research Ethics Code and Procedures* and supporting guidance
- Reviews all Postgraduate Research (PGR) ethics applications
- Reviews any items referred from Faculty/Department Ethics Committees
- Monitors consultative, evaluative and marketing research carried out by UON with its students and staff

Faculty/Department Ethics Committees (see sections 10.3 and 10.6.2)

- Review ethics applications for research by staff from the Faculty/Department and cognate Research Institutes
- Monitor and advise course, module or programme level ethics processes for research by the Faculty's taught postgraduate and undergraduate students
- Reviews any items referred from course/module/programme level

Course/module/programme-level ethics processes (see section 10.4)

- Manage local practice for reviewing ethics applications for research by taught postgraduate and undergraduate students

10.3.3 Otherwise, University staff must seek ethical approval for all research activities via the procedure established in their Faculty or Department. Staff in Research Institutes must seek ethical approval via the most appropriate Faculty or Department Ethics Committee. Current Faculty processes are updated here: <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/myriad.northampton.ac.uk/dist/0/11504/files/2021/07/Faculty-Ethics-Committees-Approval-Process.pdf>

Chairs of Faculty/Department Ethics Committees can advise re. procedures:

Faculty of Health, Education and Society

Contact: Michelle Pyer (Health/wellbeing) (michelle.pyer@northampton.ac.uk)

Jane Murray (Education) (jane.murray@northampton.ac.uk)

Manos Daskalou (Psychological & Sociological Sciences)

(manos.daskalou@northampton.ac.uk)

Faculty of Business and Law

Contact: Simon Sneddon (simon.sneddon@northampton.ac.uk)

Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Technology

Contact: Merryn Ekberg (merryn.ekberg@northampton.ac.uk)

Andrew Hewitt (Andrew.Hewitt@northampton.ac.uk)

Library and Learning Services

Contact: Dawn Hibbert (dawn.hibbert@northampton.ac.uk)

Consider if...

- The research is justified, i.e. is the research likely to add to the existing knowledge base
- It is of sufficient standard - including whether the researchers are qualified to carry out the roles proposed
- The risk it poses to participants is outweighed by the potential benefits of the research?
- The research appears to comply with all statutory and other guidance
- Data management and handling appears to comply with the relevant legislation
- Financial arrangements appear sound

Useful links

<https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/research-ethics-code-and-procedures.pdf>

Other resources

British Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics

http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_112315-7.pdf

British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelinesfor-educational-research-2018>

British Psychological Society Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/beta.bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20%20Files/Ethics%20Guidelines%20for%20Internetmediated%20Research%20%282017%29.pdf>