



## Research Ethics

### Background

The School's ethics policy and procedures were revised in 2010 in the light of the new ESRC framework for research ethics, and to bring them in line with the UKRIO Code of Practice for Research guidelines.

A relatively small part of the research carried out in the School involves human participants, only very occasionally involving children. However, some research will involve sensitive topics (political behaviour, experience of violence, exploitation, displacement) and will research in groups requiring specialist access (for example, ethnic or cultural groups, native peoples or indigenous communities).

### Procedure

All applications for research within the School (whether to be undertaken by students or staff -- or by others working under School auspices) must be checked for their ethical implications. If it is considered that the research requires further scrutiny, an application is submitted to the School's [Research Ethics Committee](#) (click for information on the Committee's composition, role and terms of reference).

The Research Ethics Committee determines the ethical propriety of research projects that are submitted to it. It aims to do this speedily, by email.

The Committee's primary role is to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants. Consideration is also given to the consequences of the proposed research (directly, or those who might benefit or suffer from its outcomes). The Committee also considers the safety of researchers. Specifically, it considers whether:

- the way the project is designed and will be undertaken is in line with the principles outlined in the School's [Code of Good Practice in Research](#);
- the subjects are informed about the aim and intended use of the research; what their participation entails; what risks, if any, are involved;
- if the research subjects request it, the information they supply shall be confidential, and their anonymity respected;
- participants in the study are participating voluntarily ;
- participants in the study will be safe;
- researchers have taken proper advice on their own safety.

Training in research ethics

Sessions on research ethics and ethical interviewing are included in the School's Research Skills Workshops. All research students whose work involves interviewing are encouraged to attend.

#### Interviewee consent

An informed consent form for interviewees which may be used as a model for School research students undertaking interviews is downloadable [here](#).

#### Note

The School is subject to the Statutes, Ordinances and other regulations of the University of London. Directors of Institutes in the School are responsible to the Dean for the adherence by its staff and students to appropriate ethical standards.

The provisions of the [Data Protection Act 1998](#) and [the Freedom of Information Act](#) 2000 are actively implemented in the University. The University, including the School of Advanced Study, is a public authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act and may be required to disclose information to enquirers in accordance with the provisions of that Act.

The University's policy on Public Interest Disclosure (Whistle-blowing) is set out in Ordinance 31, including provision for complaints to be made (inter alia) on academic or professional malpractice, and improper conduct or unethical behaviour.

#### **The School's Research Ethics Committee**

- Reporting. The Research Ethics Committee reports annually to the Research Committee.
- Membership:

Chair: Director, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (ex officio);

Members:

Chair, Research Training Committee (ex officio);

Research Student Representative;

Early-Career Researcher Representative;

Three other members of the Research Committee, drawn upon in rotation with a view to ensuring discipline spread;

A 'lay member'

- Operation

Members may give ethical approval to research applications by email circulation from a rotating selection of their number. They will hold an annual meeting in order to receive a report on collective actions over the year and on research training in ethics at the School; and to discuss any issues arising.

- Research Ethics Committee: Role and terms of reference

The primary role of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) is to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants. Consideration is also given to the consequences of the proposed research (directly, or those who might benefit or suffer from its outcomes). The REC also considers the safety of researchers. The REC determines the ethical propriety of research projects that are submitted to it. Specifically it considers whether:

- the way the project is designed and will be undertaken is in line with the principles outlined in the School's Code of Good Practice in Research;
- the subjects are informed about the aim and intended use of the research; what their participation entails; what risks, if any, are involved;
- if the research subjects request it, the information they supply shall be confidential, and their anonymity respected;
- participants in the study are participating voluntarily ;
- participants in the study will be safe;
- researchers have taken proper advice on their own safety.

It is also the role of the REC to

- provide up-to-date advice on good practice (including practical advice, such as the design of interview consent forms)
- review its own procedures and determines action it considers necessary
- report as appropriate to Research Committee, with a summary of reviewed projects and any other matters
- receive reports on the research training in ethics undertaken by students and staff.