



Bath Spa University - Code of Good Practice for Research

The purpose of this document is to guide staff and students on the policies and procedures relating to Research Ethics and Integrity that are in place at Bath Spa University.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 All forms of research need to have the confidence of the public, the academic community, the funders of research, and regulatory departments or organisations. In order to do so both principles of good practice and of definitions of misconduct need to be specified.
- 1.2 The processes and procedures set out in this document apply to all members of the institution involved in research, including staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students. It also applies to those who are not members of the institution, but who are conducting research on the institution's premises or using the institution's research facilities. It is based on guidelines produced by Universities UK ([The Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#)) and the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) [Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct](#).examples of good practice across the Sector.
- 1.3 All research at BSU is expected to be carried out:
 - with full respect of other researchers' rights and achievements
 - with full respect to the rights of participants in research projects
 - in an ethically appropriate manner
- 1.4 This document is part of the University's framework for supporting good practice in research which includes the following:
 - 1.4.1 [Approach to Research Ethics and Integrity at Bath Spa University](#)
 - 1.4.2 Code of Good Practice for Research (this document)
 - 1.4.3 [University Ethical Approval processes](#)
 - which sets out details of how to gain ethical approval for research
 - 1.4.4 [Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#)
 - which sets out details of what to do if you feel that academic misconduct is taking place at the University
 - 1.4.5 [University Whistleblowing policy](#)
 - which explains how to report suspected wrongdoing without fear of reprisals
 - 1.4.6 [University complaints procedure](#)
 - which explains how to make a formal complaint
 - 1.4.7 [Ethical Fundraising Policy](#)
 - which sets out the University's approach to fundraising and policy on accepting donations

2. Professional Standards

- 2.1 As set out in the [UUK Concordat](#) to Support Research integrity, 'researchers at the University are expected to conduct research according to the highest standards of rigour and integrity', the core elements of which are:
- **Honesty** in all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; in reporting on research methods and procedures; in gathering data; in using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and in conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.
 - **Rigour** in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards: in performing research and using appropriate methods; in adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; in drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and in communicating the results.
 - **Transparency and open communication** in declaring conflicts of interest; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data; in making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and in presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.
 - **Care and respect** for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.¹
 - **Anonymity and Confidentiality** of all participants and subjects of research
 - **Responsibility** underpinned by appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards; a culture of integrity and good governance; and support for the development of researchers.
- 2.2 These core elements of research integrity are the values through which trust and confidence in research stem, and from which the value and benefits of research flow. They apply to all aspects of research, including the preparation and submission of grant and project proposals, the publication and dissemination of findings, the management and processing of data (including storage, archiving and disposal) and the provision of expert review on the proposals of others (that is, peer review).
- 2.3 Researchers must be able to exercise freedom in their academic and artistic choices, and must also accept responsibility for the decisions they make. It is recognised that in academic scholarship and in creative arts there is a long tradition of work that defies established proprieties and risks giving offence.

¹ 'Care and respect' here should be understood as meaning that the researcher will approach the participants and subjects with academic or artistic seriousness, according to the established conventions of the discipline or genre. In creative disciplines, the phrase does not preclude critical or satirical representations, comic representations, caricatures, shocking dramatisations and offences against propriety, if these representations are undertaken with artistic seriousness.

There is no intention to curtail this freedom. Thus, the primary responsibility for ensuring that they act according to these principles in all aspects of their research work, including peer review, lies with the individual, and with the University in supporting researchers in their work.

- 2.4 Where appropriate, researchers must seek the approval of research sponsors prior to publication or other forms of disclosure, and to adhere to the standards of research practice set out in guidelines published by scientific and learned societies, and other relevant professional bodies.
- 2.5 The University has a requirement to provide for researchers, a comprehensive training and development programme to ensure that they are aware of ethical issues, and have an understanding of institutional policies and procedures
- 2.6 In line with the University's [open access policy](#), academic staff are required to deposit scholarly research outputs (journal articles, images, book chapters, video recordings, etc) into ResearchSPAcE where possible.

3. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

- 3.1 Consideration of research ethics must take into account the legal framework. Relevant legislation includes The General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (and subsequent), The Children's Act 1989 (and subsequent), the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and European Directives and conventions. As the legal obligations relating to research ethics are not covered by any single Act, research organisations have generally responded to their obligations via policy documents, codes of practice or similar.
- 3.2 Researchers will be required to comply with requests to the University under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 where these relate to the management of research at the university.
- 3.3 Researchers undertaking research in a clinical setting and other social care settings will be expected to comply with legal and medical requirements, and NHS and other relevant guidelines, policies and procedures.
- 3.4. The University will ensure that ethical training provided for researchers include a review of the legal and regulatory frameworks, including those relating to informed consent and working with vulnerable adults, and general data protection requirements (GDPR)

4. Research Leadership

- 4.1 In line with the [UK Concordat](#), the University is committed to providing 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.
- 4.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) has overall responsibility for ensuring that the University meets its obligations in relation to Research

Integrity and Ethics, and is the person to whom any genuine concerns of allegations of misconduct may be taken.

- 4.3 Executive Deans of School have responsibility for embedding a culture of research integrity within their Schools, and for the appointment of Directors of Research and research mentors, who can support research staff at school and departmental level to undertake research in the appropriate manner.
- 4.4 Directors of Research Centres have a responsibility for sharing good practice in research, for providing advice and support in line with professional body guidelines, and for fostering an open exchange of ideas and mutual co-operation amongst centre members.
- 4.5 All externally and internally funded research projects should have a Project Manager (Principal Investigator). The Project Manager is the person designated with taking overall responsibility within the team of researchers for the design, conduct and reporting of the project, and for ensuring that the research is carried out in accordance with this Code, with funding body requirements, and with any research practice guidelines produced by the relevant professional or other bodies. This includes requirements in relation to publications, IPR/Copyright and data collection and storage.
- 4.6 For students undertaking research as part (or all) of a Bath Spa University qualification whether taught or by research, it is the responsibility of the supervising tutor or Director of Studies (DoS) to ensure that the student is aware of: this Code of Good Practice; professional body guidelines; and any requirements set out by external funders of student research projects.
- 4.7 The University recognises that it has a duty of care to its own students and staff, which includes the avoidance of harm to those who are undertaking research as part of their University duties/requirements. Where appropriate, staff and students are therefore required to undertake a [risk assessment](#) as part of the ethical approval processes.

5. Researcher Development and Training

- 5.1 The University is committed to a culture of research integrity, and is responsible for delivering adequate provision in training and development to all researchers, to ensure that they are aware of and understand both the issues and principles in relation to research ethics and integrity, and the University systems and procedures that have been put in place in support of these.
- 5.2 The University has a [Researcher Development Programme](#) in place, managed by the Research Support Office. Included within the programme are sessions on the principles of research ethics and integrity, and the University procedures that should be followed in adherence of these.
- 5.3 [On-line training](#) is mandatory for all academic and research staff in relation to research integrity and ethics, and for all staff in relation to general data protection regulations

- 5.4 [Higher level ethics training](#) is mandatory for PhD Supervisors and Directors of Study, and all staff who are members of School Ethics Panels and approval processes, or the University Ethics Committee.
- 5.5 The University has a leadership development programme in place, which enables staff acting in roles set out in section 5.4 above to undertake their responsibilities in terms of the development and management of staff for which they have formal responsibility.

6. Collaborative Research

- 6.1 Research is increasingly collaborative, involving individuals from different institutions within and beyond the UK. In establishing research collaborations researchers should be mindful of the policy and guidelines set out in this document, and ensure that research partners and their employing institutions are able to meet the required standards of research conduct. This is particularly important in relation to the provenance of intellectual ideas and ownership of research outcomes as well as the specific conditions under which these may be shared. All parties should be clear about their respective roles and responsibilities within the collaboration, when appropriate drawing up written agreements, advised by the Research Support officer and the University Secretary as appropriate.
- 6.2 Where staff are involved in commercial research², a contract must be drawn up for the work, addressing issues of intellectual property, copyright, publication rights and the commercialisation of any research outcomes. Issues relating to ethical approval must be addressed as part of the contract negotiation process, with the appropriate university procedures being put in place for the ethical approval of the research concerned where appropriate.

7. Ethical Approval

The University requires researchers to comply with the requirements of the [University Ethical Approval processes](#), which include those projects requiring external approval.

- Doctoral students and academic and research staff/academic visitor applications are managed through an online initial assessment followed by approval at School and if necessary, at University level
- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students follow the relevant school level procedures for ethical approval

² Access to Library Resources is restricted for commercial purposes, and clarification should be sought from the Library for any collaborative research activities

8. **Misconduct in Research**

The [University's Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#) sets out definitions of misconduct in research, and the procedures that must be followed when allegations of misconduct in research are brought against any present or past student or member of staff of the University in respect of research undertaken while registered with or employed by the University. Any issues relating to academic misconduct should be raised with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) in the first instance.

9. **Principles of Research Integrity and Ethics**

Academic disciplines will differ in their approach to research integrity and ethics, and researchers will be required to interpret these in their research plans and applications for ethical approval. Generally speaking however, the following principles should be taken into account when undertaking research at the university alongside the professional standards set out in section 2 above.

The value of the research

The value of the research, in terms of its original contribution to knowledge, should be made apparent to all involved wherever possible. Obviously in the case of deceptive or some covert research this does not apply to participants, but needs to be justified through the procedures outlined above.

Informed consent

The word informed is important. In order to be informed, prior to consenting the participant should have an understanding of project aims, objectives, any potential benefits or harm that may arise and likely outcome of the research (eg. policy documents, publications).

It should be made clear to participants what they are consenting to and what commitments they are making, but an initial consent given does not oblige the participant to carry on through the entire research as originally requested in any formal or legalistic sense. People should be free not to answer specific questions, or to withdraw from the research process (see also right to withdraw).

The default position is that informed consent should normally be gained in writing, recorded by the researcher or otherwise demonstrated by a participant (eg, confirmation that they agree to complete a questionnaire with yes/no tick box). There may be agreed exceptions in cases where fully informed consent is thought not to be warranted (eg, ethically acceptable deceptive and some forms of covert research).

Informed consent by individuals, guardians or individuals acting in loco parentis can be complicated (particularly when children are involved). The default position is that informed consent should normally be gained in writing from the participant(s) and/or their properly authorised representative(s). In

exceptional cases there may be reasons why the participant(s) or representative(s) wish not to sign consent themselves. In such cases the researcher should record consent. Even where an authorised representative gives consent, the 'real' consent of the participant should also be obtained (see also right to withdraw).

The secondary analysis of data through access from their 'gatekeepers' does not negate the researchers involved from considering issues relating to consent, except where the gatekeeper can act in law as the consentor (eg. is a parent or guardian).

Openness and honesty

As a general principle, research should be carried out in an honest and open manner, with participants fully and honestly informed about the research rationale, method(s) and outcomes (see informed consent above). Some types of research (deceptive and some forms of covert research) may be exceptions and must be agreed (see above).

Right to withdraw without penalty

It should be made apparent to all potential participants, as part of the informed consent process, that they are free to withdraw without penalty from the research project by an agreed deadline, even if they have received inducements or payments. They may also request that consent be withdrawn retrospectively and that any accrued data regarding them be destroyed, if it is possible to identify this after anonymisation and data cleaning has taken place.

Those whose consent has been given through a surrogate can themselves request to withdraw from the research, a request that must be honoured.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Privacy is normal practice in research and law. Confidentiality and anonymity becomes a real issue when data is recorded electronically (eg. named responses to questionnaires) or when named organisations are reported upon where individual roles cannot be hidden (eg. in action research projects). Data should be coded and stored in a manner that does not allow direct recognition of individuals within the stored data set(s) by anyone other than the researcher or research team. Data should not be shared with others without the consent of the subject or their surrogate. Plans to publish research should therefore be made clear at the outset. If it is suspected (due to the nature or context of the research work) that anonymity cannot be guaranteed even if data are coded etc. then this limitation should be made aware to the participants.

Protection from harm

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not affected in an adverse manner by the research. The relationship should be one of mutual respect and based, wherever possible, on trust. Undue risk is considered to be that above and beyond risks run in the normal everyday life of the participant. Particular care is needed when the participants are from vulnerable and/or powerless groups. The responsibility for protection from harm does not necessarily end with the research project; it may extend to the life of the data set. Particular care needs to be taken when discussing the results of research projects with those *in loco parentis* or other consenting positions, since such discussion *may* prejudice attitudes toward the participants.

Briefing and debriefing

As well as being informed about the research, participants should be adequately briefed as to how the research is to be carried out from inception to dissemination (see informed consent above). Wherever possible participants should also receive information relating to the outcomes of the research. Sometimes, for example in some forms of laboratory controlled psychology research, debriefing may involve remedial action to negate post-participatory effects, for example where negative moods have been induced.

Reimbursements, payments and rewards

Any arrangements should be clearly articulated to participants, in writing wherever possible. If staged or progressive payments are involved these should be clearly articulated from the beginning. Withdrawal of the participant between stages does not negate the obligation to reimburse the participant for completed stages. Reimbursements, payments and rewards may not be used to induce participants to take undue risk.

Suitability/experience of researcher

Investigators should have the relevant academic/professional competence to carry out the research project. In particular they (meaning either an individual in terms of an individually-led project, or the 'team' in the case of joint research) should have experience of dealing with the ethical dimensions of the research.

Ethics standards of external bodies and institutions

Where external bodies and institutions (either those funding the research, or professional bodies to which the researcher belongs) have their own ethical codes these must be followed. If there is any conflict with BSU principles and procedures these should be identified as soon as possible and the relevant academic managers notified.

Reporting on ethical issues throughout

If there are interim reports, whether verbal or written, ethical issues should be acknowledged and discussed throughout.

Research for clients/consultants

Where it is necessary, ethical positions should be clarified with external clients and organisations prior to the research beginning. Agreement should preferably be in writing. It is particularly important to establish data ownership rights and rights to publish (on both sides), since this establishes future 'gatekeepers'. Care should be taken not to compromise the BSU ethics guidelines and/or professional codes.

Intended dissemination

Should be relayed to the participant as part of the consent process. Wherever possible summaries of research findings (preferably in non-technical language) should be relayed to participants.

Data Management

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that they comply with general data protection regulations (GDPR) including the lawful processing of data, and the management and storage of data, and with Bath Spa University [Information Governance policies and procedures](#).

[On-Line Training](#) on research data management is available and further information can be found on the university intranet [here](#).

11. Further guidance and support

[UK Research Integrity Office \(UKRIO\)](#) is an independent charity providing advice and support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in academic, scientific and medical research.

UKRIO and The Royal Society have published a [Research Integrity Toolkit](#)

Discipline Specific Guidance

[British Educational Research Association](#) Ethical Guidelines

[British Psychological Society code of Ethics and Conduct](#)

[British Sociological Association guidelines on Ethical Research](#)

Research Council Guidelines

[The UKRI Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct](#)

[ESRC FAQs](#)

Internet-mediated research

[Association of Internet Researchers \(2012\)](#)

[British Psychological Society \(2013\)](#)

COSMOS [Ethics Statement](#) and [Resource Guide](#)

Research Data Management

[Information Commissioner's office:](#)

[Digital Curation Centre](#)

[UK Data Service](#)

[JISC Data Management Toolkit](#)