Statement of Practice Ethical Research

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Summary

This document is designed to help you, the researcher, to understand the basic principles of ethical research and to determine whether you need formal ethical approval for your research studies.

It is essential that all research studies undertaken by University of Law staff, students or associates conform to these principles, and that formal approval is sought through the Ethics Committee if your research involves human participants[1] or is deemed to be sensitive research[2].

Research involving human participants is particularly sensitive. You need to understand what falls within this category of research and, if you decide to undertake it, you will need to carefully consider how you intend to conduct, analyse, and present your findings. Completing the Application Form for Ethical Approval form (available at https://www.law.ac.uk/policies/) will help you through this process.

This document is subdivided into three sections:

- **Section 1** Statement of Practice in relation to ethical research
- **Section 2** provides guidanc

Section 1: Statement of Practice

1 Introduction

Depending on the context, the word *ethics* and its relationship to academic research is understood and defined in numerous different ways. In its simplest form, ethics is a way of understanding and examining what is right and what is wrong .

In the context of any study, ethical practice is particularly important where human participants are involved, either through their direct participation (for example, through interviewing

(PSRBs), the Concordat for Research[3], and University policies, before applying to the Ethics Committee for approval.

1.2 Before You Begin

Prior to commencing your study, you should do the following:

1. Read through all sections of this document.
2. Review the Ethics Approval Flowchart (Appendix A).
3. Complete the ER1 Research Ethics Checklist and Notification Form (available at https://www.law.ac.uk/policies/ .
4. If required, proceed to the Formal Approval Stage (see section 1.4)

1.3 Self-certification

The majority of studies are expected to fall in this category.

In order to qualify for self-certification, your study must not involve human participants or be deemed sensitive. To determine this, you must complete the ER1 Research Ethics Checklist and Notification Form. If you answer NO to either of the three questions on the first page of the checklist, you do not need to obtain formal approval for your study. In this case, you may proceed with your study,

reporting but have been widely reported by the British media and are in the public domain.

You are not permitted by the University to engage with human participants or proceed with any aspect of your research deemed to be sensitive until approval has

Section 2: Guidance for Conducting Ethical Research

2 Introduction

This section provides you with the guidance necessary to ensure that you meet the minimum ethical standards when conducting research.

2.1 General Principles

You must ensure that you maintain the highest ethical standards in relation to the *honesty* and

participant sufficient time to make an informed choice to participate or to change their mind about being part of the research study.

In addition to this cooling off period, you must ensure that potential participants have all relevant documentation (to include as a minimum the Explanatory Statement and the Informed Consent form) at least 24 hours prior to their participation in the research.

If researchers are using anonymous questionnaires, it is recommended that the content of the Explanatory Statement and Informed Consent forms are embedded within the questionnaire also, to ensure that participants can demonstrate they have read these documents and can consent to proceeding with participating in the research.

2.3.3 Informed consent

Researchers must ensure that participants are fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended use of the research data.

Consent Hard Copy

All participants must provide signed evidence of informed consent prior to taking part in the research. They should be fully briefed and aware of any potential risks or implications of

Before commencing data collection, participants must have received an Explanatory Statement prior to them signing a consent form.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all participants fully understand the implications of the research. The explanatory sheet should be written in clear and accessible English and must be kept by the participant.

A template for an explanatory statement is provided at https://www.law.ac.uk/policies/ - ER4 Specimen Explanatory This can be used by researchers and adapted as necessary. However, an explanatory statement should always include the following:

- The title of your study
- Your contact details (but not your personal address or telephone number) as well as a University contact (eg your supervisor).
- A clear statement notifying the participant that, should they initially agree to take part in the research, they can, at any time (or, in the case of research by

2.3.5 Protecting participants

Scenario 9: Protecting participants

You formally interview an employee working for a local firm. Despite receiving an Explanatory Statement explaining that you were granted permission to conduct the research on the agreement that the firm would receive a copy of the final report, the participant makes disparaging remarks about their line2.504 532.87 450.46 162.74 reW*BTF3 12 Tf1 0 0 1 460.54 626.74 T

Confidentiality is essential for protecting participants. It may also be appropriate to

protected, and the use of anonymous research primarily depends on the chosen research methodology.

As a researcher, it is your responsibility to ensure that any harm to participants is avoided. Harm includes **physical, psychological,** and **reputational** harm. For this reason, confidentiality and anonymity are paramount, and you must address this at an early stage of study design.

2.3.5.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality relates to the protection of the data collected.

Your process of obtaining, recording, storing, etc personal data in connection with your study must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation. The Explanatory Statement and Informed Consent Form should clearly explain to participants how the data will be stored and what security measures will be in place in order to maintain its confidentiality.

It is also important to realise that the final research paper may be read by a number of people who are outside the control. You need to appreciate fully the level of confidentiality that you can or cannot guarantee.

2.3.5.2 Anonymity

Anonymity is the ability of the researcher to remove the identity of participants from the data. At its most basic, anonymity means removing all personal identifiers such as name, age, gender, title, and location.

Anonymity may be difficult to guarantee due to the size and scope of the research sample. If you want to conduct research where the sample size has fewer than 10

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nature of any data released (ie data collected during your research; your research results, or the finalised dissertation).

2.3.11 Retention of data

In line with the General Data Protection Regulation, the Explanatory Statement and Informed Consent Form should clearly explain to participants the length of time for which the data will be stored.

2.4 Further Help

For additional help and guidance, you should contact: ethics@law.ac.uk

2.5 References and Acknowledgments

In informing the development of this policy, a broad range of publicly available material and resources have been used from government departments, professional bodies, and other Universities, including:

- Association of Research Ethics Committees
- British Library (Social Science Research Subject Guides)
- Council for Industry and Higher Education
- ESRC Framework for Research Ethics
- Falmouth University
- Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE)
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- Office of Research Integrity
- Research Councils UK
- Social Research Association
- University of Bath
- University of East Anglia
- University of Leeds
- University of Sheffield
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Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.2	Deputy Academic Registrar	Removal of forms from document; updating of terms	April 2020
V1.3	Senior Quality Officer	Clarification of terms	December 2020

V1.4	Senior Quality Officer	Amendment to Sensitive Research Paragraph	April 2021
V1.5	Campus Dean Guildford and Reading	Inclusion of new section 2.3.5 regarding	October 2021
V1.6 V1.7	Quality Assurance Manager	Minor amendments throughout	January 2022

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Flowchart