

London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures

1. General principles

- 1.1 The University is committed to the maintenance of high ethical standards in the research undertaken by its staff and students, whether supported directly by the University or funded by external sources. The University recognises its obligation to ensure that research undertaken under its auspices is conducted to appropriate standards, and conforms to generally accepted ethical principles and practices.
- 1.2 The University believes that ethics review and approval are important for the following reasons:
 - 1.2.1 to enhance the quality of research;
 - 1.2.2 to protect the rights and welfare of participants and minimise the risk of physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger from research procedures;
 - 1.2.3 to protect the welfare of researchers and their right to carry out legitimate investigations;
 - 1.2.4 to minimise the potential for claims of negligence made against the University, its researchers and any collaborating individual or organisation; and
 - 1.2.5 to ensure the reputation of the University for the research it conducts and sponsors.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all academic and administrative staff, and all students conducting research projects and related activities as part of undergraduate, postgraduate or short course taught or research programmes. This includes every research project involving members of academic and administrative, full-, part-time and honorary staff at London Metropolitan University, and every research project conducted by postgraduate research students enrolled/registered at, and/or supervised by staff at, London Metropolitan University (except where the research project, Principal Investigator and/or postgraduate research student is based or enrolled/registered elsewhere and where the research project has been approved by an equivalent ethics committee/panel following a comparable level of ethics review).¹
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's *Code of Good Research Practice* and the University's policy on research misconduct and dealing with allegations of misconduct in research, which is contained within the *Code*. The Code provides guidelines on the issues involved in the proper conduct of research, and on the standards expected.
- 1.5 In terms of the University's policy on research misconduct, any member of staff or postgraduate research student who conducts research projects without ethics review and approval may face an investigation of research misconduct and may be subject to disciplinary procedures.
- 1.6 This policy does not refer directly to broader questions of ethical behaviour within the University in areas other than research. Statements relating to the University's ethics and values more broadly construed are embedded within its mission statement and policies in such areas as admissions, international relations and human resources.

¹ Under these circumstances a copy of the relevant *Research Ethics Review Form* and formal notification of ethics approval should be forwarded to the appropriate Faculty-specific Research Ethics Review Panel at London Metropolitan University. The proposed research project cannot proceed until these documents have been received by the Research Ethics Review Panel, and the Panel has confirmed that the level of research ethics review and approval involved meets or exceeds the standards required by the University. Where these standards have not been met, the Research Ethics Review Panel may require that an additional research ethics application be submitted to the Panel and/or to an appropriate external UK- or country-specific research ethics service.

2. Ethics management structures

- 2.1 The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Research and Enterprise Committee. Under delegated authority from the Board of Governors, Academic Board, and the Research and Enterprise Committee, the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee serves to develop, monitor and oversee the implementation of policies, guidelines and procedures devised to ensure that research at the University is conducted according to ethical principles. The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee also provides advice, guidance and support to academic staff supervising research projects and related research activities conducted as part of taught undergraduate, taught postgraduate or taught short course programmes, who are responsible for ensuring that these projects and activities conform to accepted ethical principles and practices.
- 2.2 The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee may, at its discretion, draw on appropriate expertise from one or more nominated external representatives.
- 2.3 Research Ethics Review Panels (RERPs) are formally constituted sub-committees of the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee based within, and supported administratively by, each of the University's Faculties. The Research Ethics Review Panels take responsibility for conducting formal ethics reviews of research projects requested by University staff and postgraduate research students. The Research Ethics Review Panels also provide advice, guidance and support to academic staff supervising research projects and related research activities conducted as part of taught undergraduate, taught postgraduate or taught short course programmes, who are responsible for ensuring that these projects and activities conform to accepted ethical principles and practices.
- 2.4 Research Ethics Review Panels are chaired by suitably qualified academic staff members and membership is drawn from staff with research ethics expertise. Research Ethics Review Panels may also draw on staff from within the Faculty concerned and from other Faculties to provide an appropriate range of expertise in research and/or ethics.
- 2.5 The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee meets at least three times a year.
- 2.6 The Research Ethics Review Panels meet at least once a year and at other times conduct business by correspondence or arrange additional meetings, as required.

3. Ethics review procedures

- 3.1 The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee and its Research Ethics Review Panels do not, under normal circumstances, review and approve research projects and related research activities conducted as part of taught undergraduate, taught postgraduate or taught short course programmes, but provide advice, guidance and support to academic staff supervising such projects and activities, who are responsible for ensuring that these projects and activities conform to accepted ethical principles and practices.
- 3.2 Before research projects conducted by staff or postgraduate research students can proceed, they are required to undergo ethics review and receive ethics approval from the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee's Research Ethics Review Panels.
- 3.3 The University's research ethics review and approval procedures require the completion and submission of a *Research Ethics Review Form* to the relevant Research Ethics Review Panel. The Form should be completed by either the member of staff responsible for the research project (whether as Principal Investigator or grant-holder) or the postgraduate research student

concerned (in full consultation with all staff and students involved in the proposed research project).

- 3.4 The Research Ethics Review Panels may approve the research project as described; request additional clarification or modification of the research project to ensure that this complies with accepted ethical principles and practice; or withhold ethics approval.
- 3.5 Additional ethics review by an external UK- and/or country-specific research ethics review service may also be required.
- 3.6 If no ethical concerns are identified by the Research Ethics Review Panel, the research project can proceed.
- 3.7 Where the Research Ethics Review Panel identifies the need to submit a *Research Ethics Review Form* to an external UK- or country-specific research ethics service (i.e. 3.3.1.2 above), the member of staff or postgraduate research student responsible for the research project must apply for research ethics approval from the relevant research ethics service(s) concerned (in full consultation with all staff and students involved in the proposed research project), and must forward a copy of the relevant *Research Ethics Review Form* and formal notification of ethics approval to the appropriate Faculty-specific Research Ethics Review Panel at London Metropolitan University. The proposed research project cannot proceed until these documents have been received by the Research Ethics Review Panel, and the Panel has confirmed that the level of research ethics review and approval involved meets or exceeds the standards required by the University. Where these standards have not been met, the Research Ethics Review Panel may require that an additional research ethics application be submitted to the Panel and/or to an appropriate external UK- or country-specific research ethics service.
- 3.8 If difficulties with approval arise, the Research Ethics Review Panel will consult with the applicant responsible for the research project and seek to resolve these difficulties. If agreement or resolution cannot be reached, the decision of the Research Ethics Review Panel Chair/Deputy Chair is binding. Where there are matters of concern at the level of the Research Ethics Review Panel, these should be referred to the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee.
- 3.9 Research Ethics Review Panels will endeavour to initiate correspondence with applicants responsible for research projects in which potential ethical concerns have been identified within ten working days (two weeks) from the receipt of the *Research Ethics Review Form*.
- 3.10 Research Ethics Review Panels will endeavour to complete the review of *Research Ethics Review Forms* within twenty working days (four weeks) from the receipt of the *Form*.

4. *Research ethics approval*

- 4.1 Research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research (whichever is shorter), on the understanding that:
 - 4.1.1 the researcher has accurately and honestly completed all the questions on their *Research Ethics Review Form*; and that the proposed research, once approved, is conducted in line with the information provided in the *Form* and in any related research ethics applications;

- 4.1.2 the research complies with UK legislation governing research (including that relating to health and safety, human tissues and data protection);
- 4.1.3 the researcher complies with the University's *Code of Good Research Practice*;
- 4.1.4 the researcher will inform their Research Ethics Review Panel of any changes to the proposed research that alter the answers given to questions in the *Research Ethics Review Form* or the information provided in any related research ethics applications (particularly where these changes would require a revised research ethics application to be submitted to an external research ethics committee and/or to the most appropriate Faculty-specific Research Ethics Review Panel); and
- 4.1.5 the researcher will apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

Research and Enterprise Committee
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Resources:

Concordat to Support Research Integrity
<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf>

Code of Practice for Research: Promoting Good Practice and Preventing Misconduct – UK Research Integrity Office
<http://www.ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Code-of-Practice-for-Research.pdf>

Recommended Checklist for Researchers – UK Research Integrity Office
<http://www.ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Recommended-Checklist-for-Researchers.pdf>

Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research – UK Research Integrity Office
<http://www.ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Procedure-for-the-Investigation-of-Misconduct-in-Research.pdf>