

Research Ethics Policy

Contact Officer

Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Research

Purpose

This policy sets out the principles for ethical research and the processes by which researchers should seek ethical approval for their research. It is expected that this policy will be read in conjunction with the relevant subject-specific and professional codes and guidance on ethics and research conduct as well as taking into account all relevant legislation.

Overview

This policy is organised into sections:

1. Scope of Policy
2. Ethical Principles
3. Roles and Responsibilities of Staff and of Ethical Review Bodies in Ethical Review Procedures
4. Ethical Review Procedures (taught degree students)
5. Ethical Review Procedures (research degree students)
6. Ethical Review Procedures (Staff and Associate Researchers)
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The Policy

1. **Scope of policy**

1.1 All academic activity at the University of Worcester should be conducted according to

the research is of a sensitive nature or where the research requires children to undertake activities beyond those normally asked of them.

2.3.6 For research involving persons lacking mental capacity, researchers, in keeping with the [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#), should:

assume a person to have capacity to consent unless it is established that they lack capacity

not treat a person as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help them to do so have been taken without success

not treat a person as unable to make a decision merely because they make an unwise decision

2.3.7 Research involving persons with mental capacity cannot be approved under the University's ethics processes as it is not an appropriate body. It must be referred for review by an NHS Research Ethics Committee. Intrusive research is defined as research that would be unlawful if it was carried out on or in relation to a person who had capacity to consent to it, but without their consent.

2.3.8 ¹, researchers should adhere to the principle of gaining informed consent/assent from the participants themselves, whilst respecting the legitimate interests of the gatekeeper.

2.3.9 There may be some types of research design (e.g. deception studies or covert research) that require the research to be undertaken without informed consent. Such design should be carefully considered and fully justified with procedures put in place to provide post research full debrief and/or granting of post hoc consent.

2.4 **Voluntary Participation**

2.4.1 As well as being informed, consent should also be freely given. Researchers should ensure that participants are taking part in the research voluntarily, that they do not feel pressured or obliged to participate, and are not subject to coercion.

2.4.2 Researchers should be aware that where there is a power relationship between the researcher (or representative of the researcher, e.g. a gatekeeper) and the participant - such as between a lecturer and their students or a doctor and their patients - a person may feel compelled to participate. In these circumstances, a researcher should endeavor to find ways of ensuring voluntary participation, e.g. by using a neutral intermediary to gain consent.

2.4.3 Researchers should also be aware that the use of incentives to encourage participation may be viewed as coercion if such incentives are any more than a token. For example, giving those who complete a questionnaire access to a free prize draw will not normally be seen as coercive. On the other hand, paying individuals more than reasonable expenses to take part in an interview *would* normally be seen as coercive. However, it

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should also be recognized that in some cultural contexts payment for participation in research is a recognized part of the research process.

2.5 **Confidentiality**

2.5.1

To support their students towards a greater understanding and engagement with ethical issues in research

To ensure their students are fully aware of this policy

indicate they application does not need ethical approval³ The research is not normally subject to any further review.

- 4.4 It is important to note that students should keep their answers to the checklist questions under review. If the student believes at any point during the research that they would now immediately inform their supervisor who will advise the next course of action.
- 4.5 normally they must progress to complete a full Application for Ethical Approval; however, where the

Application incomplete
Rejection

4.12 Where a researcher is asked to complete amendments for the approval by the Chair a timescale will be specified. Failure to meet this timescale may lead to the researcher having to make a new application.

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involve limited intrusion or disruption to others; and involve participants who would not be considered vulnerable in the context of the research.

- 5.9 The student should submit the agreed Application for Ethical Approval and associated documents to ethics@worc.ac.uk identifying in the subject line the

Blackboard pages and guidance from the Health Research Authority to determine whether NHS or other approvals are required in addition or in place of University of Worcester approval.

- 9.3 If a student wishes to request a review of a decision of a Supervisor, they are required to submit a written statement setting out the grounds for the review with any supporting evidence to the Chair of the relevant College Research Ethics Panel within 20 working days of receiving the Supervisor
- 9.4 They will normally consider the request within 10 working days of receiving the paperwork and relay the decision to the student and their supervisor.
- 9.5 They may reach the following decisions:
the case is rejected and the original decision of the Supervisor stands
the case is upheld and the Application for Ethical Approval is referred to the relevant College Research Ethics Panel for review
- 9.6 There is no further right of review if the Application for Ethical Approval is subsequently rejected.
- 9.7 If a researcher (staff or student) wishes to request a review of a decision of

10.3 If subsequent to 10.2 a researcher wishes to make a complaint relating to the conduct of a supervisor or an ethical review body, they are required to submit a written statement setting out the grounds for the complaint with any supporting evidence to the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

10.4 Complaints should be made within a reasonable timescale. A complaint may be summarily rejected where it is felt the researcher has not acted within a reasonable timescale.

10.5 If the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee upholds the complaint they will decide on a course of action to resolve or redress the complaint.

10.6 The decision to uphold or reject the complaint and any actions will be communicated to the researcher and the supervisor or Chair of the ethical review body within 10 working days.

10.7 There is no further right of complaint.

11. Continuing Ethical Review

11.1 The University does not undertake a systematic continuing ethical review of research undertaken. As noted above, however, it encourages all researchers to review their answers to the checklist on an ongoing basis and to resubmit for approval where there are deviations from the approved research.

11.2 It is also common practice for ethical review bodies to approve research in stages or phases rather than as a whole, recognizing that later phases of data collection may change substantively in light of earlier stages.

11.3 The University also undertakes an audit of a random sample of approved research. Some researchers will be approached to complete a questionnaire, in the case of a student in conjunction with their supervisor.

12. Collaborative Research

12.1 Where research is undertaken with another HEI, it is best practice that only the relevant ethical review of the research, with the HEI(s) of any co-investigator(s) being kept fully informed of the process and outcome. This is in line with the ESRC Research Ethics Framework which recommends that organisations should avoid duplication of full ethical review.

12.2 Where research is undertaken with an organisation outside the Higher Education sector that has its own ethical approval system, the same principle of avoiding duplication of full ethical review should be maintained. In the case of research involving NHS patients or premises as noted above, approval should be sought through relevant NHS ethical review processes with the outcome and approval paperwork being forwarded to the relevant ethical review body. In the case of other organisations, judgment should be made on a case-by-case basis as to whether the research should be subject to full review by

Worcester and/or the collaborating organisation, with advice being sought from the relevant Institute Ethics Coordinator or Secretary of a Research Ethics Committee.

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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data; Standard Operating Procedures for UW Research Ethics Committees; Research Integrity Policy
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	Guidelines and Code of Practice for Ethical Research