Manchester Institute of Education

Ethical Practice

Policy and Guidance

Introduction

Rights and fundamental freedoms

"***Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life***

1 Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence." (Human Rights Act, 1998)

This article, set out in the Convention on Human Rights, put into legislation what many academics and scientists would regard as a 'given'. Of course we respect others, as we expect others to respect us. However, in research involving human participants[1] that is intent on improving the lot of fellow citizens, occasions have arisen where focus on outcomes has meant that due attention to process, the respect due to participants, has been inadequate and very occasionally, unethical. For example, in order to truly consent to take part in a study, the person requires clear and complete information about what they are being asked to do. However, the information given to potential participants can be 'sketchy', or written in a style that is difficult for the lay person to understand. Researchers need to ensure that they are sensitive to the rights of participants when implementing any study, and that their own behaviour matches the highest standards.

Within the Manchester Institute of Education (MIE), we wish to ensure that the highest of standards, in relation to ethical practice, are observed. This document has, therefore, been designed to inform and guide students and staff in MIE on ethical practice in the conduct of research and research related activities. As educational, counselling or care service practitioners, most of the data gathering activities undertaken involves contacts with participants, that is, students, clients or other types of 'service user'[2]. It is imperative therefore that we ensure that our relationships with our participants observe and enforce their rights to self-determination.

Two issues therefore arise, firstly, to ensure that any study we seek to undertake is designed in a way that is cognisant of the rights of participants. Secondly, that in undertaking studies involving participants we conduct our research in an ethical manner. As researchers and practitioners, we have a duty to meet both these objectives.

This document outlines the ethical practice policy of the Manchester Institute of Education. It provides guidance on demonstrating research integrity and on ethical practice in relationships with participants. Staff and students should ensure that they carefully follow the guidance given in this document, MIE Handbooks and other guidance provided on the MIE Intranet, in relation to any study involving participants. Staff supervising student data collection activities, are responsible for ensuring that the student has completed a research risk and ethics assessment (RREA) and, where appropriate, to submit the application for ethical review.

[1] The term 'participant' refers to any person who provides data in any context.
[2] The term 'service user' is adopted in recognition that, in addition to student teachers, MIE also provides courses for professionals in allied disciplines.

The Manchester Institute of Education Research Ethics Protocol

The purpose of the protocol is to outline the principles of ethical practice for students in the Manchester Institute of Education. These principles are informed by, and designed to comply with, those of authoritative bodies (BERA, BPS) and the research funding council ESRC.

Principle 1: Respect for Human Dignity
Research and practice will protect and be sensitive to the multiple and independent interests of the persons involved directly or indirectly in research. Due regard will be given to age, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs and lifestyle (or any other significant difference between such persons and the researcher or other participants in the research) when planning, conducting and reporting on research or practice activities.

Principle 2: Ensure Integrity and Quality
Research and practice must be designed to be of the highest quality and use appropriate methods.

Researchers will never present others' work as their own. Nor will they knowingly misrepresent the findings of their research or the work of others.

Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of the research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research, (although participants may not be able to be given their individual results).

Principle 3: Respect for Free and Informed Consent
In law, individuals are presumed to have the capacity and right to make free and informed decisions. Informed consent entails giving as much information as possible about the proposed research aims and processes, in non-technical language so that prospective research participants, and/or their proxies, can make an informed decision about their involvement. In compulsory education settings this is relevant to research on pedagogical or other issues where the purpose of proposed activities is not primarily to benefit pupils who participate, but to illuminate the wider knowledge base.

This information will normally be supplied in written form (information sheet) and signed off (consent form) by the research participant(s). Wherever possible children under sixteen, will be facilitated to give fully informed consent. For those with low literacy skills (younger children / adults with learning disabilities) appropriate alternative means of gaining informed consent will be employed. This will mean producing an 'accessible' information sheet that may need to be discussed with support from their parent, caregiver, or other advocate, or holding an information giving event, where 'consent' is recorded by an appropriate associated activity.

The primary objective is to conduct research openly and without deception, in an environment where the ethos and approach is transparent.

Principle 4: Respect for Vulnerable Persons
Respect for human dignity entails maintaining ethical obligations towards persons whose diminished competence and /or decision making capacity make them vulnerable. Researchers must recognise that vulnerable research participants may experience distress or discomfort that non-vulnerable persons are unlikely to experience. They will therefore take extra care, and introduce extra measures where necessary, to make the nature and aims of the research clear. Researcher will take particular account of the vulnerable person's communication needs and comfort at all times.

Principle 5: Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality
The confidentiality of information provided and anonymity of respondents must be respected. Appropriate measures will be taken to store data in a secure manner and observe requirements under the Data Protection Act (see summary in Appendix). Any form of publication will not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

Research participants will be informed that their data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be reported in anonymised form. An exception for disclosing certain information exists where there are clear and overriding reasons to do otherwise, for example in relation to the abuse of children. Passing on confidential information without the express permission of the research participant should not be undertaken lightly, and legal and professional advice will be sought immediately if this is contemplated.

Principle 6: Participation should be Voluntary
Researchers will inform participants of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time and for any reason. Practitioners in educational settings are entitled to expect participation from children of compulsory school age where the purpose is to improve their education. However, issues of voluntary participation are relevant in relation to research activities not solely focused on improving educational provision to the children concerned.

Coercion is strictly prohibited and no pressure will be placed on individuals or organisations to participate. Care will be taken if offering an incentive. It is inappropriate to offer excessive payments which might induce participation in a study against the person's better judgment. Small payments may be made in order to compensate research participants for their time and inconvenience. Out-of-pocket expenses may also be met.

Principle 7: Procedures should avoid Harm
Research will be conducted in such a way that it minimises harm or risk to research participants, researchers themselves and wider society. Researcher's and participant's interests or well-being will not be damaged as a result of their participation in the research. The health and safety of participants and researchers will be paramount in all activities. Any activity will be stopped immediately if the research participant shows any sign of distress, and will not recommence without the agreement of the person concerned (or his/her parent or person acting in loco parentis, caregiver or advocate). Similarly, activities will be stopped where the researcher is subject to harm, or threat of harm, directly or indirectly. Research will not place an excessive burden on any individual or organisation participating and will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times, negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and participants.

Types of Data Collection Activity

Two general approaches to data collection may be employed in research – primary and secondary – either independently or in tandem.

Primary Research
Primary Research involves the generation of new knowledge through collection and analysis of new data. The aim of such a study may be to improve participant outcomes though any of the full range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including changes in practice through Action Research.

Secondary Research
This research does not involve contact with participants, but uses data held by public or private organisations, or individuals to generate new knowledge. Typically it will include literature review, documentary or other media analysis, but can also involve secondary analysis of existing data archives.

Demonstrating Research Integrity

Students, supported by their tutors and supervisors, need to become fully conversant with the nature and practice of 'research integrity', and to establish the level of risk associated with the research they intend to undertake. This is established through completion of the Research Risk and Ethics Assessment (RREA) and a Fieldwork Risk Assessment form, where required. A full and honest evaluation of the potential risks of proposed research studies should be undertaken. Bearing in mind the Manchester Institute of Education research ethics protocol, University of Manchester Code of Good Research Conduct, and Data Protection Act 1998, the appropriate ethical review application should then be completed.

Secondary research does not involve direct or indirect contact with participants. However, the paper or electronic media based activities should nevertheless reflect the highest research standards. For example, it should be conducted in accordance with copyright law and avoid plagiarism[3] (as in any other academic activity).

In certain circumstances, a researcher may have located documents or other media made available by a private organisation or individual (for example minutes of meetings or a series of letters). Alternatively, they may wish to interrogate a dataset held by an organisation. In this case, as with other 'recruitment' activity, the aims of the research and the way in which the dataset, documents or media will be used, must be made clear and agreed with the proprietor of the data/documents/media. Evidence of such agreement should be gained using guidance on informed consent.

Primary research within MIE is highly likely to involve participants, directly (through completion of interviews/questionnaires or involvement in an intervention) or indirectly (through use of existing personal records gathered for other purposes). Research integrity must be demonstrated in both Primary and Secondary research activities. However, only ***primary research*** requires formal 'ethical review' by an authorised committee.

[3] Plagiarism is presenting the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement. It also includes 'self-plagiarism' (which occurs where, for example, you submit work that you have presented for assessment on a previous occasion), and the submission of material from 'essay banks' (even if the authors of such material appear to be giving you permission to use it in this way).

Vulnerable adults

Where you will be conducting research involving:

- NHS patients
- adults who cannot consent themselves due to limited mental or physical capacity,
- young offenders, or
- prisoners

then approval must be sought via the Health Research Authority (HRA) through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS - see notes below).

Data protection

One area of major concern in research with human participants is protecting the confidentiality of personal data. The Data Protection Act 1998 sets out a list of criteria that researchers must abide by. MIE intranet pages (RI and ethics) provide guidance on Data Protection. Students should ensure a good working understanding of the points raised in this document and ensure that they are explicitly addressed within applications for ethical approval. The standard now is for e-data to be encrypted rather than password protected.

Data archiving

In order to ensure, in the unlikely event of a complaint, that data from studies conducted in the University of Manchester may be examined after publication of findings, **the University requires data remain in the custody of supervisors and archived for a minimum of five years**.

Compliance with this directive means that on completion of a research study from which findings are published (including postgraduate dissertations and theses, or any research paper from which data is published); a copy of the dataset must be archived within MIE. Students completing their studies should consult with their supervisors to arrange for their data to be archived. This data should be in electronic form (wherever possible) for ease of transfer and storage.

Research Integrity Committee

The Research Integrity Committee (RIC) oversees issues and processes relating to research integrity within MIE.

1. They provide training, advice/guidance to staff members.
2. They review applications for ethical approval constituting 'medium risk', to ensure they match a University Research Ethics Committee approved template.
3. Some members of the RIC also review UREC ethical review applications to ensure that they are complete and correct before submission. These members also sit on UREC panels.
4. When research studies appear to have conflicted with the University of Manchester Code of Good Research Conduct, the RIC also convenes a meeting of the Research Integrity Breach Panel to review the facts and recommend a course of action.

Research Integrity Processes

In brief:
Stage A –Complete the RREA form, and Fieldwork Risk Assessment (FRA) where indicated. Review and discuss RREA with your supervisor
Stage B – Send FRA, if relevant, for approval and sign off. Complete relevant ethical review application form in consultation with your supervisor - using available guidance
Stage C – Supervisor agrees the assessed research risk level and that the ethical review application is correctly completed. They submit the application, with supporting documents including your approved FRA (where relevant), for approval.
Stage D
Approval/referral for amendment of ethical approval application by:

UREC	-	HIGH risk research	All Students HIGH risk research
MIE RIC member	-	MEDIUM risk research	- All UG/PGT MEDIUM risk research All PGR MEDIUM risk Pilot studies All PGR MEDIUM / LOW risk dissertation studies
Supervisor	-	LOW risk research	– All UG /PGT LOW risk research All LOW risk PGR Pilot studies All LOW risk Prof Doc research papers

Fieldwork Risk Assessment (FRA)

A fieldwork risk assessment is simply a careful examination of aspects of your proposed fieldwork that may cause harm to you, particularly as the majority of studies are carried out outside the University campus. It is conducted alongside your Research Risk and Ethics Assessment (RREA). Where you and your supervisor identify specific risks to your health and safety such that the RREA Low Risk Fieldwork Statement cannot be confirmed, you should complete a full Fieldwork Risk Assessment (FRA) form. You will then be able to decide upon the most appropriate action to take to minimise risks to your safety.

The Fieldwork Risk Assessment form includes guidance to help you and your supervisors consider potential risks and make decisions about the safeguards that will be put in place. The Fieldwork Risk Assessment form is available on the Manchester Institute of Education intranet: http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/ethics/

Completed forms need to be sent, along with your ethical review application (RREA, MIE or UREC) to the authorised signatory, Alan Jervis (alan.jervis@manchester.ac.uk) for review and approval **before** your supervisor submits your ethics documents to the Ethics Administrator to initiate the ethical review process. Approval of your FRA should **only** be sought when your study details have been agreed by your supervisor/PGR panel and hence your fieldwork plans are finalised.

Risk Assessment of all activities is required by Law.

Research Integrity - Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities:

- To follow guidance from teaching staff and in MIE documents.
- To complete necessary actions in a timely fashion.
- To refrain from participant recruitment and data collection until ethical approval is confirmed.
- To implement research design and dissemination as detailed in the approved application.
- To seek further approval if changes are necessary BEFORE deviating from proposal.
- To report incidents that arise which conflict with the MIE Research Ethics Protocol.
- To take part in audit processes if required.

Supervisor Responsibilities:

- To provide appropriate teaching and guidance to students in relation to research integrity.
- To act in a timely fashion in relation to student research preparation, discussions in relation to approval of RREA/FRA, and actions relating to MIE/UREC requirements.
- To ensure that the appropriate route for student research review is followed.
- To submit the RREA/MIE/UREC application for ethical review/archive to the Ethics Administrator who will arrange confirmation and archive (RREA), or appropriate 'sign off' (MIE/UREC) where necessary. In doing so you confirm:
    i. The research design is appropriate and achievable within the timescale;
    ii. The student understands their ethical responsibilities and has the requisite experience, knowledge and skills to carry out the research in an appropriate manner.
    iii. There are no risks, or acceptable levels of risk for which measures for minimisation have been agreed; or where risks have been identified, safeguards are determined and the assessment reviewed and approved by the MIE authorised signatory.
- To keep accurate records and establish a clear audit trail.
- To take part in audit processes if and when required.

NB: Ethical approval can only be given for your study as presented in the UREC or MIE Ethical Approval Application Form or RREA (and supporting proposal/outline), if you make more than minor changes[4] to the research design, participants etc then you will have to make a new application. Minor amendments should be approved by the supervisor, committee member/chair confirming the original approval. Approval for minor changes in relation to Medium or High risk studies should be submitted to the Ethics Administrator in the first instance, for action. Minor changes approved for Low risk studies on the RREA form, should be submitted by the supervisor to the Ethics Administrator for logging and archive.

Health Research Authority (HRA)

Where you will be conducting **research involving NHS patients, young offenders, prisoners or adults unable to self-consent** approval must be sought via the Health Research Authority (HRA). This involves completing an online Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) application. As with other research proposals, submission for approval can only be undertaken after your project has been approved by your supervisor/PGR panel.

As this is an online application, the IRAS form is designed to adapt to the type of research design proposed. It prompts for information relating to the design specified, that will enable Local Research

[4] Minor changes are those that do not alter the character of the research or the participant groups.

Ethics Committees (LRECs) to make a decision regarding the ethical issues the study raises. Applicants must register to use the service. All applications completed, or part completed will be recorded in the user's 'account'.

Applications may be saved and completed over a period of time. Your draft IRAS form may be downloaded for review as often as required before submission.

Completed IRAS forms matching the approved study design, signed by you and your supervisor, must be sent to the University of Manchester Research Office for review, and for completion of any additional documents required by HRA. Once the Research Office is satisfied with the application, the University Director of Research signs the form to confirm that the University will act as 'sponsor' of the research. Only when this is complete can the application be 'submitted' (online and followed by signed copy by post).

This process can take a considerable length of time to complete. Information about IRAS applications is available from https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Help/HelpPage.aspx

The University Research Office also provides help and guidance with completing an IRAS form.

What happens if I have not applied for or obtained ethical approval?

Failure to follow MIE's procedure for ethical approval may leave you in breach of the University's Code of Good Research Conduct. It may leave you and the University open to legal action without the protection of an insurance policy and is likely to result in disciplinary action.

Suspected breaches of ethical approval are investigated within the Manchester Institute of Education for medium/low risk studies and by the University Research Office for high risk studies. Where intention to circumvent the University Code of Conduct is identified, students are referred to the University's Student Disciplinary Procedures.