Research ethics and code of good research practice		
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Research ethics and code of good research practice

Revision History

Revision	Date	Revision Description DCRT#	Originator
01	10 February 2005	New document	Celesta McCann James
02	11 May 2005	Revisions based on Postgraduate sc of AC comments	Diarmuid O'Callaghan

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline institute policy and procedure relating to ethical issues that may be relevant to conducting research at the Institute. It also outlines basic standards relating to good practice in conducting research. In particular, this document refers to issues relating to use of human subjects and animals in research.

2. Scope

This document is relevant to all postgraduate students conducting research, and their supervisors. It is also relevant to undergraduate students and their supervisors if conducting a project involving research activities.

3. Reference

2MP19	Research policy and strategy
4FAD06	PG1: Application for Admission to Postgraduate Degree Programme
4FAD17	Application for ethical clearance of a project

4. Policy

- All researchers in the Institute must be committed to high standards of professional conduct consistent with the research strategy of the Institute (see Research policy and strategy (2MP19).
- Researchers must behave in a competent and honest manner
- Researchers have a duty to ensure that their work enhances the good name of the Institute and the profession to which they belong.
- Research workers must participate only in work which conforms to accepted ethical standards and which they are competent to perform.
- Research workers are obliged to behave in an ethically sound manner when conducting research involving humans or animals
- Research workers are required to consider and declare any ethical issues at the time of application to conduct the research. (See PG1: Application for Admission to Postgraduate Degree Programme (4FAD06) or Application for ethical clearance of a project (4FAD17) as appropriate and appendix below). Research involving ethical considerations may not be initiated without approval.
- All academic debates or disputes relating to research and publications should be carried out in a respectful manner so that there will be no harm to the reputation of individuals or the Institute.
- Research workers have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all those associated with their research.

Integrity and competence

- Researchers should conduct themselves in a professional manner and demonstrate openness, honesty and objectivity in all of their research activities. This will include:
    - Unbiased and objective pursuit and reporting of findings
    - Openness about all methodological procedures

  - Clear presentation of any potential limitations that may relate to research claims or recommendations
  - Assurance that conclusions and recommendations are appropriate and relevant to key findings
  - Full identification and reference of any contribution made to the research that is not that of the researchers
- Researchers will recognise the boundaries of their academic competence and their ability to use particular research methods appropriately
- Researcher will identify explicit knowledge and skills required to undertake their proposed research
- Researcher will be appropriately acquainted with their research subject and avoid unnecessary repetition of existing work
- Researcher will identify the research proposal as essential to developing information or knowledge, not otherwise obtainable
- Researcher will terminate an activity when it is clear that the activity is more harmful than beneficial or when it is no longer needed

The use of humans for research purposes

- The following list of guidelines (based on the code of ethics of the American anthropological association) must be supported:
  - A researcher's paramount responsibility is to those studied. Where there is conflict of interest, the subject must come first. Researchers must do everything within their power to protect their informants' physical, social and psychological welfare and to honour their dignity and privacy.
  - The aims of the investigation should be communicated as well as possible to informants.
  - Informants should have the right to remain anonymous.
  - Questions asked should not be insulting or embarrassing.
  - The use of monitoring devices such as tape recorders and cameras should be open, and fully understood by the people concerned. They should be free to reject them if they wish. Results should be consonant with the informant's right to welfare, dignity and privacy.
  - There should be no exploitation of informants for personal gain. Fair returns should be given to subjects for all services. There is an obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of research and publication on those studied.
  - The privacy and wishes of informants should at all times be respected.
  - No reports should be provided to sponsors that are not also available to the general public and, where possible, to the group studied itself.
  - The onus is on the researcher to comply with these guidelines. Where there is doubt in the mind of the researcher, the proposed research project should be referred to the postgraduate studies subcommittee of Academic Council.

Confidentiality and privacy

- Researcher will make every effort to protect the identity and confidentiality of research participants. Participants are taken to include not only those who are the principle focus of

the research, but also those upon whom the research impact, whether at present or retrospectively

- Researcher will inform participants prior to the research of confidentiality procedures and possible limitations associated with the research
- Researcher will anticipate circumstances where confidentiality may be threatened and address matters accordingly
- Researcher will ensure that all personal data of participants is collected and stored in a manner consistent with the Data Protection Act 1998 and that individuals have clear details concerning what will happen to the information they provide. Research workers must not use such information for their own personal advantage or to the advantage of a third party.
- If data of a confidential nature are obtained, confidentiality must be observed and data (including all forms of primary research materials) must be recorded or retained in a durable and appropriately referenced form and held for a period of at least five years to protect the researcher and the Institute in case of an allegation of falsification of data.
- If possible raw data will be stored in an anonymous form to prevent identification of research participants
- Participants retain the right to decide what information they wish to divulge
- Participants should be sure that their privacy is protected and that they are under no pressure or obligation to discuss matters against their will
- Privacy is applicable to individual and also to their communities and culture

Respect and equality

- Researcher will not give any evidence of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sectarian or religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, health condition, marital or domestic status.
- Researcher will act according to values of diversity, equality and tolerance
- Researcher will ensure the free and informed consent of all participants
- Researcher will embrace the right of an individual to be free to agree or refuse to participate
- Researcher will ensure, as much as is reasonable, that all participants have a full and comprehensive understanding of the nature and purpose of the research including the purpose of the research and of all intended outcomes
- In the case of participation by individuals who are minors or living in circumstances where they are unable to provide informed consent, the researcher will seek the consent of a third party (a legal guardian, custodian or intermediary)
- Researchers' conducted research with children or individuals unable to give their consent will be aware of child protection issues and procedures and have successfully completed any necessary checks before beginning their research
- Participants will be ensured that they have the right to withdraw from the research (either temporally or permanently) at any time and without the need to provide a reason
- Participants may withdraw any consent they have previously given regarding their own data contribution. Researcher will ensure that any such data is destroyed and that participants are guaranteed of the act
- Where appropriate, researchers will keep participants informed as to the progress of the research

- Researchers will develop a clear strategy for concluding relationships when the research has been completed
- Researchers should ensure that they recognise participants' time and effort given to the research study
- Where appropriate, researcher will give feedback to participants regarding the findings of their research
- Upon completion of the research, participants should be given a means of contacting the researcher or research team regarding any queries or issues that may consequently arise for them concerning their involvement in the research

Social Responsibility

- Researcher will avoid or refuse to participate in practices which are disrespectful of the legal or moral rights of others
- Researcher will ensure that predictable injury, either through instruction or oversight, will be prevented
- Researcher will endeavour to maintain public confidence throughout the research and safeguard to ability of others to undertake future research
- Researcher will make any necessary arrangements for support for participants (and their families or communities) who have been traumatized by the research
- Under no circumstances will untrained researchers attempt to provide advice or counselling to such individuals
- Researchers should make every effort to anticipate any misuse or misrepresentation of research findings

The use of animals for research purposes

- The use of live animals in scientific research and other experimental activity is strictly controlled in accordance with the *Cruelty to Animals Act 1876*, as amended by the *European Communities (Amendment of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1876) Regulations 2002*.
- Under the Act, experiments on live animals can only be performed by persons licensed by the Minister for Health and Children and in premises registered for that purpose. The Act, as amended:
    - Restricts the use of animals in experiments;
    - Provides general requirements for the care and accommodation of experimental animals;
    - Provides standards for breeding, supplying and user establishments;
    - Provides that an experiment shall not be performed if another scientifically satisfactory method of obtaining the result sought, not entailing the use of an animal, is reasonably and practicably available.
- It is policy not to licence any experimental activity using live animals for testing of cosmetics.
- For further details see **http://www.dohc.ie/public/information/environmental_health/animal_experimentation.html**

Safety and well-being of the researcher

- In designing and undertaking research, researchers have a duty to safeguard their own safety and well-being
- Researchers will ensure that they have made every reasonable effort to avoid placing themselves or others in situations where they may be at risk of physical harm
- If researchers anticipate any likely emotional effects from their research, they should have support mechanisms in place prior to initiating research and arrangements for de-briefing sessions with a counsellor
- Researcher will practice self-reflection throughout the research period
- Researcher will identify their own motivation for their research and the impact the research process has upon them
- Researcher will be aware of knowledge, skills, values, and life experiences that inform the research, decisions and interpretation of data
- Researcher will review and reflect upon the research process by charting and monitoring what is being learned and what will develop further academic, professional, and personal potential

Publication and authorship

- Where there is more than one author of a publication, it will be presumed that they are jointly and severally responsible for the content of the publication.
- The minimum requirement for authorship is participation in conceiving, executing or interpreting the research.
- Authors should ensure that the work of research students, research assistants and technicians is acknowledged.
- Publication of multiple papers by the same author(s) based on the same materials or set of data is improper unless there is full cross-referencing.
- Plagiarism and falsification of research results are regarded as serious disciplinary matters.
- Agreement is required from any external partners before publication. Researchers should be aware of the possible conflict between the external partner's desire for confidentiality and the researchers desire to publish.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest

- Researchers should disclose any affiliation with or financial involvement in, any organisation or entity with a direct interest in the subject matter or the provision of materials for the research. This should be submitted in writing to their Head of School.

Ethical clearance for research

- Research which involves one or more of the following requires ethical clearance.
    - Human experimentation, including surveys, behavioural observations
    - Animal experimentation
    - Genetic manipulation
    - Use of teratogens, carcinogens and any cytotoxic substances.
    - Use of ionising radiation

  - The possibility of a conflict of interest due to financial incentives / benefits from a sponsor
  - The collection, storage and use of data of a sensitive or confidential nature.
  - The potential for conflict over authorship; fair recognition of all the participants an the research
  - If ethical clearance is a stated requirement of the funding agency.
  - Emerging areas of research not yet listed or any research where the researcher is uncertain of the requirement.
- The onus is on the researcher (or in the case of undergraduates, the research supervisor) to be aware of this and comply with institute requirements.
- Failure to comply will be regarded as serious misconduct
- Ethical clearance for postgraduate research must be applied for using form PG1: Application for Admission to Postgraduate Degree Programme (4FAD06) and referenced within the context of this procedure document and the appendix below.
- Ethical clearance for undergraduate research or other projects not involving postgraduate students must be applied for using the form Application for ethical clearance of a project (4FAD17) and referenced within the context of this procedure document and the appendix below

Appendix: Ethics checklist for research projects

If you answer **yes** to any of these questions, you may have an ethical issue that required addressing. Please provide full details in application form PG1: Application for Admission to Postgraduate Degree Programme (4FAD06).

	Yes	No
Are any of the following topics to be covered in part or in whole?		
– research about parenting		
– research investigating sensitive personal issues		
– research investigating sensitive cultural issues		
– explorations of grief, death or serious/traumatic loss		
– depression, mood states, anxiety		
– gambling		
– eating disorders		
– illicit drug taking		
– substance abuse		
– self report of criminal behaviour		
– any psychological disorder		
– suicide		
– gender identity		
– sexuality		
– race or ethnic identity		
– any disease or health problem		
– fertility		
– termination of pregnancy		
Are any of the following procedures to be employed?		
– use of personal data obtained from Government Department/Agency		
– deception of participants		
– concealing the purposes of the research		
– concealing participation in the study from participant		
– neglecting to tell participants that they can discontinue participation at any time		
– neglecting to inform participants of the nature of their involvement in the collection of data and of all features of the research that reasonably might be expected to influence willingness to participate		
– covert observation		
– coercion of subject to participate		
– audio or visual recording without consent		
– recruitment via a third party or agency		
– neglecting to seek consent forms from subjects, parents or guardians		
– withholding from one group specific treatments or methods from which they may benefit		
– release of non-coded information collected to third parties		
– any psychological interventions or treatments		
– administration of physical stimulation		
– invasive physical procedures		
– infliction of pain		
– administration of drugs		
– administration of other substances		
– administration of ionising radiation		

– tissue sampling or blood taking		
– collecting body fluid		
– genetic testing		
– use of medical records where participants can be identified or linked		
– drug trials and other clinical trials		
– use of live animals		
– administration of drugs or placebos		
Are there other risks		
– are there any risks to the researcher		
– are there risks to the physical safety of the subjects (from dangers such as faulty electrical equipment, poor grounding, lack of oxygen, falls, traffic and industrial accidents, the possibility of hearing or vision loss, and so forth		
– is confidentiality breakdown possible		
– is there a risk that promises to participant will not be fulfilled		
– could publication of the results possibly harm the subject either directly or through identification with his/her membership group?		
– are there aspects of this study that may interfere with the protection of the well-being and dignity of the subjects?		
– will you neglect to inform the subject that if they are dissatisfied or complain about the research procedures, that they may express their feelings to the Head of Department?		
Do any of the participants fall within the following targeted categories?		
– suffering a psychological disorder		
– suffering a physical vulnerability		
– people highly dependent on medical care		
– minors without parental or guardian consent		
– people whose ability to give consent is impaired		
– resident of a custodial institution		
– unable to give free informed consent because of difficulties in understanding information statement (such as language difficulties)		
– members of a socially identifiable group with special cultural or religious needs or political vulnerabilities		
– those in dependent relationship with the researchers (such as lecturer/student, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil, professional/client)		
– participants be able to be identified in any final report when specific consent for this has not been given		
Does the research involve any of the following		
– research being undertaken in a politically unstable area		
– research involving sensitive cultural issues		
– research in countries where criticism of government and institutions might put participants and/or researchers at risk		
– research involving physical stress (or the subject's expectation thereof), such as might result from heat, noise, electric shock, pain, sleep loss, deprivation of food and drink, drugs, alcohol?		
– research involving the induction of mental discomfort in the subject (examples: fear, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, shame, guilt, embarrassment, becoming aware of personal weaknesses)		

//end