



UNIVERSITY TEACHING & RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice¹

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¹ Based on Guidelines developed by the School of Geography and Geoscience, which were itself based on various web pages offering ethical guidelines – see p11-12, the web pages marked with an asterix. Schools should adjust these Guidelines to best suit their needs.

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Summary of Requirements

1. All research and teaching activities of all staff and students in all Schools/Units of the University that involve data collection from, interviews of, interactive investigation of, experimentation upon or demonstrations involving living human subjects, tissues and / or other samples will require formal Ethical Approval.
2. Applications must be submitted to the appropriate School Ethical Committee, a subcommittee of UTREC. University approval must be obtained in conjunction to any external review bodies e.g. NHS REC Applications should be submitted on an individual project basis, unless as part of teaching, whereby a module based application can be submitted by the lecturer/supervisor. Applications must be submitted for all undergraduates, postgraduate and staff research projects.
3. Applications should be completed on the generic Ethical Application Form and submitted to the relevant School Ethics Committee. The generic Ethical Application Form can be found at <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/EthicalApplication/>
4. All supplementary documentation must be submitted with the application, if applicable, e.g. participant information sheet, debriefing summary, consent form, questionnaires, advertisements, letters to parents or schools. The researcher and supervisors name and contact details must be present on all documentation issued to participants. With the exception of Undergraduate students who must include only their own name without contact details and also the name and contact details of their supervisor must be present on all supporting documents issues to participants
5. Working with Children and or Vulnerable Groups
 - a. Protection of Vulnerable Groups [PVG] approval must be obtained by all researchers involved in projects that involve the participation of Children under the age of 16 and vulnerable adults. A PVG application will be required if you intend to conduct research involving the participation of children, Vulnerable Adults (a protected adult is a person, 16 or over, who receives care or welfare services, short or long term) and/or is within a vulnerable institution e.g. Care Home, School, Nursery.
 - b. Child Panel Representative has been appointed by UTREC to consult with researchers on all research involving the participation of children; to provide general advice and good practice protocols; to advise on Schools/Nurseries to approach; to ensure that Enhanced Disclosure Applications have been submitted and any relevant external bodies have been contacted.
6. Approval may be required from external authorities, such as;
 - a. the Education Authority if working with children; initial agreement to access the schools/nursery's can be obtained. However you must advise the School/Nursery that UTREC approval is being sought and LEA agreement will be obtained before access commences.
 - b. the NHS REC (Research Ethics Committee) in any research involving or relating to the NHS and their patients, or if working with people with learning or communication difficulties.
 - c. the Prison Authority of working with people in custody
 - d. the Police if working with people potentially engaged in illegal activities
7. Where there is no formalised system of ethical approval in an overseas institution the researchers must make every effort to obtain written consent stating that the institution is happy for the researchers to conduct the research, and this should be submitted with the Ethical Application Form for the records.

8. It is a requirement that any Honours or Masters dissertation or PhD thesis that required ethical approval from UTREC, should have a letter of ethical approval containing an approval code number (allocated by the Database) bound into an appendix before submission.
9. This committee does not deal with research activities involving the use of living animals. Researchers in this area must refer to the University's Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC) for ethical guidance and approval.

E t h i c a l R e s e a r c h

Research undertaken in the University, from first year student assignments to faculty research projects, should be conducted according to sound ethical principles, and engage in a thorough consideration of ethical issues that arise during the entire research process. All research should reflect upon implications of our research for participants in the research, funding bodies, colleagues, other researchers and society at large.

Research within the University is undertaken at a number of different levels, including: research projects undertaken by academic staff or contract research staff, whether sponsored by funding bodies or conducted on a private or non-funded basis; research by postgraduate students undertaken for doctoral and Masters theses; research undertaken by undergraduate students for dissertations and for fieldwork and practical modules. All members of the University – academic staff, research staff, postgraduate students and undergraduate students – must ensure that all research adheres to the highest level of integrity and ethical responsibility.

All research conducted by any School that involves living human subjects, or may impact upon them, must be assessed for its ethical implications. Research commonly involves interaction with individuals and groups as research subjects and informants, raising issues of fair treatment, representation, privacy and confidentiality. Research may also raise issues concerning human subjects and informants, for example research on flooding/subsidence/landslides that might cause emotional distress or financial loss. We all have ethical duties to our colleagues and assistants, and to our discipline(s). It is expected that all research should adhere to the Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice outlined below.

These Guidelines are not intended as a rigid set of rules. Instead they are meant to educate researchers, sensitise them to potential sources of ethical conflict, and the dilemmas that may arise in research, scholarship and professional practice. They are intended to be informative and evolutionary rather than authoritarian or bureaucratic.

P r o c e d u r e s

All research has the potential to be exploitative and damaging, even when intended to benefit the greater public good. Even research that does not appear to have implications for human subjects might raise other ethical issues to do with intellectual property, sponsorship, roles in research, and so on. All staff and students must therefore read these Guidelines and follow procedures. Each School has an Ethics Committee which is a subsection of UTREC and generally ethical approval is given by the School committee. In certain cases the School passes the application to UTREC. In these Guidelines to clarify matters in that the School Committee is part of UTREC, the School Committee is known as the School Ethics Committee (SEC) and the University Ethical Committee as UTREC.

The Ethical Application Form must be signed and submitted to the SEC for consideration, and no empirical research may commence before approval has been granted. Research involving human subjects may also require external approval, for example from a National Health Service Research Ethics Committees (RECs) or from Ethics Committees at other universities. For international research, it is recommended that the researcher considers any ethical procedures that are practiced locally. As far as possible, and to enable (rather than frustrate) the research process, the School Committee will endeavour to minimise the efforts of duplication. Other external authorities may also need to approve the research activities, such as the Educational or Environmental Authorities or the Police. In some cases there may be a need for criminal record checks, carried out by Disclosure Scotland. Research with children (see <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/children/>) and other vulnerable groups, for example, will have to obtain satisfactory Disclosure Clearances <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/disclosure/>, www.disclosurescotland.co.uk. These checks take time and should be

requested well in advance.

Research that falls outside these School parameters will be referred to UTREC for consideration. Research activities that involve the use of living animals (including mammals, reptiles, birds, fish, insects, etc.) do not fall under these Guidelines, and must instead be referred to the University's Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC).

(a) Research Proposals by Staff: For all proposed research projects involving human subject's staff should complete an Ethics Application Form and submit the form together with any attachments to the SEC. The Committee will review the application, return for more detail if necessary, grant approval where appropriate and enter details into the UTREC database. If the SEC considers that substantial ethical issues are involved it will refer the application to UTREC.

10. **(b) Postgraduate Doctoral and Masters Research:** All postgraduate students whose research involves human subjects must complete, with their supervisor(s), an Ethics Application Form before the commencement of empirical fieldwork. The completed form, together with any attachments, should be endorsed by the supervisor and submitted to the SEC for consideration. (Note: Postgraduate students must include both their own and their supervisors name and contact details on all supporting documents issued to participants.) The School Committee will review the application, return for more detail where necessary, grant approval where appropriate and enter details into the UTREC database. If the SEC considers that substantial ethical issues are involved it will refer the application to UTREC. It is a requirement that any Honours or Masters dissertation or PhD thesis that required ethical approval from UTREC, should have the letter or email of ethical approval bound into an appendix before submission.

11. **(c) Undergraduate Dissertations:** Supervisors should assess the compliance of proposed undergraduate research with the School's Guidelines when assessing dissertation proposals. Students whose research involves, or potentially impacts upon, human subjects must complete a full Ethics Application Form before the commencement of empirical fieldwork. The completed form, together with any attachments, should be endorsed by the supervisor and submitted to the School Committee for consideration. (Note: Undergraduate Students must include only their own name without contact details and also the name and contact details of their supervisor on all supporting documents issues to participants). The School Committee will review the application, return for more detail where necessary, grant approval where appropriate and enter details into the UTREC database. If the SEC considers that substantial ethical issues are involved it will refer the application to UTREC. Students will not normally be permitted to undertake research for dissertations that falls outside School Guidelines, but in exceptional cases proposals may be referred to UTREC. It is a requirement that any Honours or Masters dissertation or PhD thesis that required ethical approval from UTREC, should have the letter or email of ethical approval bound into an appendix before submission.

(d) Other Undergraduate Research: In the case of other modules that may require undergraduate students to undertake research involving human subjects (e.g. fieldwork and practical modules), it shall be the responsibility of the Module coordinator to identify appropriate procedures for monitoring research practice and ensuring, as far as is possible, that the Guidelines are adhered to. In some cases the Module coordinator may wish to complete an Ethics Application Form for the module itself.

(e) Safety: It should also be noted that researchers face a range of potential risks to their safety. Safety issues must be considered in the design and conduct of research projects, and procedures should be adopted to reduce risk. Researchers should also fill in risk assessment forms where applicable and follow safety regulations at all times. For more information, see the Health and Safety Policy Statement of the University Court <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/Healthandsafety/Publications/HealthandsafetypolicyoftheUniversitycourt/> and contact the School Safety coordinator for the Safety in Fieldwork booklet.

(f) Teaching of Ethical Practice in Research: In order to promote self-regulation of the research process, it would be helpful if discussion of the Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice could be incorporated into the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes. At undergraduate level, ethical issues in research should be incorporated in the second and third year curriculum. At postgraduate level, ethical practice in research could best be discussed as part of the School's internal research training. Tutors and supervisors should ensure ethical practice in research is discussed with all undergraduate and postgraduate students who are intending to undertake research involving, or potentially impacting upon, human subjects.

G u i d i n g P r i n c i p l e s

These Principles address the ethical issues that may be faced by undergraduates, postgraduates and staff in the University during the course of their research. Though adapted from the Statement of Ethical Practice of the British Sociological Association and the Ethical Guidelines of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth they apply to all research. They are also informed by the ethical codes of the Social Research Association and the American Sociological Association. Web references to these sources are provided at the end of this document. Researchers may also wish to consult the University's statement on Good Research Practice available at http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/good_research_practice%202007.pdf

The purpose of these Principles is to make researchers aware of the ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own ethical practice. They do not, therefore, provide a set of recipes for resolving ethical choices or dilemmas, but recognise that it will be necessary to make such choices on the basis of principles and values, and the (often conflicting) interests of those involved.

Styles of work in the various Schools are diverse and subject to change, not least because researchers work within a wide variety of settings. Indeed, there is great variation in individuals' moral precepts and the conditions under which they work. But all researchers inevitably face ethical, and sometimes legal, dilemmas that arise out of competing obligations and conflicts of interest. The following Principles advise researchers about ethical concerns and potential problems and conflicts of interest that may arise in the course of their professional activities. The statement is not exhaustive but summarises generic principles for ethical research practice. The strength and utility of these Guidelines rest ultimately on active discussion, reflection and continued use by researchers.

(a) Professional Integrity

Research must be undertaken to the highest level of integrity and ethical responsibility, including research design and frameworks, and each researcher is responsible for the conduct of his or her own research. The onus lies with the researcher to ensure that he/she always meets the highest standards that could reasonably be expected of them, and with the employing institution to ensure that systems are in place to support and re-inforce this. Where research is undertaken without ethical approval being first gained, responsibility for anything that may go amiss will lie with the researcher, but also, if the researcher is a student, with the supervisor.

Research is a valuable activity and contributes to the well being of society. Researchers should strive to maintain the integrity of these disciplines, the freedom to research and study, and to publish and promote the results of research including making data available for the use of researchers in the future.

Researchers have a responsibility to safeguard the interests of those involved in or affected by their work, and to report their findings accurately and truthfully. They need to consider the effects of their involvements and the consequences of their work (or its misuse) for those they study and/or other interested parties. Researchers should familiarise themselves with the national laws and administrative

regulations (for example Data Protection Acts, the Human Rights Act, copyright and libel laws) which may affect the conduct of their research, data dissemination and storage, publication, rights of research subjects, of sponsors and employers, etcetera.

While recognising that training and skill are necessary to the conduct of research, researchers should themselves recognise the boundaries of their professional competence. They should not accept work of a kind that they are not qualified to carry out. Researchers should satisfy themselves that the research they undertake is worthwhile and that the techniques proposed are appropriate. They should be clear about the limits of their detachment from, and involvement in, their areas of study.

In their relations with the media, researchers should have regard for the reputation of the discipline and refrain from offering expert commentaries in a form that would appear to give credence to material that, as researchers, they would regard as comprising inadequate or tendentious evidence.

(b) Relations with and responsibilities towards research participants

Researchers, when they carry out research, enter into personal and moral relationships with those they study or work with, be they individuals, households, social groups or corporate entities. Although researchers are committed to the advancement of knowledge, that goal does not, of itself, provide an entitlement to override the rights of others. Researchers should be aware that they have some responsibility for the use to which their data may be put and for how the research is to be disseminated. Researchers also have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests. Because researchers sometimes engage in research activity that directly involves, or indirectly affects, relatively powerless social groups as well as those more powerful than themselves, research relationships are frequently characterised by disparities of power and status. Research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by trust and integrity. In some cases obligations of trust and protection may weigh less heavily but these obligations should not be discarded lightly.

(i) Negotiating informed consent

As far as possible participation in research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied. This implies a responsibility on the researcher to explain in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, how it is to be disseminated and used, and how data is to be stored and archived for further research (if appropriate). Negotiating consent entails communicating information likely to affect a person's willingness to participate, such as: the purpose(s) of the study, and the anticipated consequences of the research; the identity of funders and sponsors; the anticipated uses of the data; possible benefits of the study and possible harm or discomfort that might affect participants; data storage and security; archiving (where appropriate); and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to informants and subjects. Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish.

When making notes, filming or recording for research purposes, researchers should make clear to research participants the purpose of these techniques and, as precisely as possible, to whom information collected in this manner will be communicated. It should be recognised that research participants have contractual and/or legal interests and rights in data, recordings and publications. Where there is a likelihood that data may be shared with other researchers, the potential uses to which the data might be put must be discussed with research participants and their consent obtained for the future use of the material. See also Appendices 1, 2, 3.

Interviewers should clarify whether, and if so, the extent to which research participants are allowed to see transcripts of interviews and field notes and to alter the content, withdraw statements, to provide additional information or to add glosses on the researcher's interpretations. Clarification should also be

given to research participants regarding the degree to which they will be consulted prior to publication. Where possible, participants should be offered feedback on findings, for example in the form of a debrief or summary report.

It should also be borne in mind that in some research contexts, especially those that involve field research, it may be necessary for the obtaining of consent to be regarded, not as a once-and-for-all prior event, but as a process, subject to renegotiation over time. Particular care may need to be taken during periods of prolonged fieldwork where it is easy for research participants to forget that they are being studied.

In some situations access to a research setting is gained via a ‘gatekeeper’ who is acting on behalf of an individual such as a child under 18 or a vulnerable person such as a parent or teacher or care manager. In these situations researchers should adhere to the principle of obtaining informed consent directly from the research participants to whom access is required, while at the same time taking account of the gatekeepers’ interest. Since the relationship between the research participant and the gatekeeper may continue long after the researcher has left the research setting, care should be taken not to compromise existing relationships within the research setting.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon researchers to be aware of the possible consequences of their work. Wherever possible they should attempt to anticipate, and to guard against, consequences for research participants that can be predicted to be harmful. Researchers are not absolved from this responsibility by the consent given by research participants.

In many of its forms, geographical research intrudes into the lives of those studied. While some participants may find the experience a positive and welcome one, for others, the experience may be disturbing. Even if not harmed, those studied may feel wronged by aspects of the research process. This can be particularly so if they perceive apparent intrusions into their private and personal worlds, or where research gives rise to false hopes, uncalled for self-knowledge, or unnecessary anxiety. Researchers should consider carefully the possibility that the research experience may be a disturbing one and should attempt, where necessary, to find ways to minimise or alleviate any distress caused to those participating in research. It should be borne in mind that decisions made on the basis of research might have effects on individuals, even if individual research participants are protected by confidentiality and anonymity.

Special care should be taken where research participants are vulnerable by virtue of factors such as age, disability, and their physical or mental health. Researchers will need to take into account the legal and ethical complexities involved in those circumstances where there are particular difficulties in eliciting fully informed consent. In some situations proxies may need to be used in order to gather data. Where proxies are used, care should be taken not to intrude on the personal space of the person to whom the data ultimately refer, or to disturb the relationship between this person and the proxy. Where it can be inferred that the person about whom data are sought would object to supplying certain kinds of information, that material should not be sought from the proxy. Any proxy must be made fully aware of, must agree with and must adhere to the ethical practice outlined in these Guidelines.

Research involving children requires particular care. The consent of the child should be sought in addition to that of the parent. Access to children should always be obtained through an appropriate and responsible ‘gatekeeper’ (e.g. teacher, youth group leader). Researchers should use their skills to provide information that can be understood by the child; they should also assess the child’s capacity to understand what is being proposed. Specialist advice and expertise should be sought where relevant. Researchers should have regard for issues of child protection and make provision for the potential disclosure of abuse.

Normally all consent should be gained in writing unless agreed by the SEC and UTREC. As stated by the Economic and Data Service (Appendix 3), ‘Written consent should be gained whenever possible to

ensure that information is being collected and provided in a consistent and uniform way. Not only is it necessary under current ethical and data protections requirements but it also acts as a guarantee should any form of dispute arise. It is the researcher's responsibility to gain the participant's trust by outline the research proposal, the aims and outcomes and benefits of secondary re-use.' Exceptions may include (a) research in areas of the world (generally the less developed world) where written consent may be an alien concept or may be conceived as a threat. (b) on a 'street-survey' involving the public (if over 18) in a public place but this depends on the type of questions being asked. Reasons for not gaining written consent must be given.

Further points to be aware of are, as given by ESRC:

- Consent must be thought through at the planning stage otherwise secondary analysis is jeopardised
- Consent must be freely given with enough detail to indicate what has been agreed
- There must be active communication between the parties - what is expected from participants and why their participation is required
- Documentation outlining consent has to differentiate between consent to participate and consent to allow findings to be shared or published
- Consent cannot be inferred from a non-response to a communication such as a letter or invitation to participate

See also reference to 'Informed consent' in the St Andrews University document 'Data Protection Act 1998 and Research', Appendix 1.

(ii) Covert research

Covert research is defined as practice, in which the researcher disguises, or fails to disclose, their identity and/or purpose in order to gain access to private space or to information that is not in the public domain. Covert research does not include observational research in public space, informal or off-the-record conversations with individuals that are secured without misrepresentation, or the use of secondary sources that are in the public domain.

Wherever possible and appropriate, research should be conducted on the basis of informed consent. However, the use of covert methods may be justified in certain circumstances. For example, difficulties arise when research participants change their behaviour because they know they are being studied. Researchers may also face problems when powerful or secretive interests close access to spheres of social life to social scientists. A clear rationale should always be given for the use of covert research, including explanation of why the research could not be conducted on the basis of informed consent.

Covert researchers should be aware of the emerging legal frameworks surrounding the right to privacy. Covert participant or non-participant observation in non-public spaces or experimental manipulation of research participants without their knowledge should be resorted to only where it is impossible to use other methods to obtain essential data. In such studies it is especially important to safeguard the anonymity of research participants and research using covert methods should be particularly careful in writing up research findings to ensure that the identity of participants cannot be identified.

Researchers should note that there is a distinction between withholding some of the details of the hypothesis under test and deliberately falsely informing participants of the purpose of the research, especially if the information given implied a more benign topic of study than was in fact the case. While all researchers should seek to supply as full information as possible to those taking part in their research, a central principle is the reaction of participants when deception is revealed. If this leads to discomfort, anger or objections from the participants then the deception was inappropriate. Such a principle protects the dignity of participants while allowing valuable research to be conducted.

(iii) Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

Informants and other research participants should have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected. They should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality, and be able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras. Researchers should be careful, on the one hand, not to give unrealistic guarantees of confidentiality and, on the other, not to permit communication of research data to audiences other than those to which the research participants have agreed. Where possible, threats to the confidentiality and anonymity of research data should be anticipated by researchers and the identities and research records of those participating in research should be kept confidential whether or not an explicit pledge of confidentiality has been given. Researchers should also be aware of the possible, or at least potential, need to anonymise sites and locations, not just individuals. Researchers should be aware that some funding bodies, e.g. ESRC, may require the archiving of data, and in such cases, participants must be informed and give consent.

Appropriate measures should be taken to store research data in a secure manner. Researchers should familiarise themselves with their obligations under the Data Protection Acts. Where appropriate and practicable, methods for preserving anonymity should be used including the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical means for breaking the link between data and identifiable individuals and places. Researchers should also take care to prevent data being published or released in a form that would permit the actual or potential identification of research participants without prior written consent of the participants. Potential informants and research participants, especially those possessing a combination of attributes that make them readily identifiable, may need to be reminded that it can be difficult to disguise their identity without introducing an unacceptably large measure of distortion into the data.

The anonymisation of research participants may not always be possible or appropriate. In considering whether to grant anonymity to research participants, researchers should take into account the public position and profile of the participant and the degree of information that is needed about the participant to enable interpretation of the research findings. For example, there may be less reason to extend anonymity to elite interviewees such as councillors, government officials and company directors, than there is for research participants in less high-profile positions. Where a research participant is not to be anonymised they should be made aware of this before giving their consent to participation in the research. There may be fewer compelling grounds for extending guarantees of privacy or confidentiality to public organisations, collectivities, governments, officials or agencies than to individuals or small groups. Finally, it may become apparent later in the research process that granting anonymity might be necessary to avoid any negative consequences. Where guarantees have been given they should be honored, unless there are clear and compelling public interest reasons not to do so.

Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity given to research participants must be honored, unless there are clear and overriding reasons to do otherwise (e.g., in relation to the abuse of children). By convention, confidential and non-anonymous data may be shared within a research team or between a student and their supervisor, where such practice is necessary for the functioning of the research, but all people given access to data in this way must also be made aware of their obligation to respect guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. By the same token, researchers should respect the efforts taken by other researchers to maintain anonymity. Researchers should be aware that legal procedures might override any confidentiality agreements made with participants.

Researchers should take special care when carrying out research via the Internet. Ethical standards for Internet research are not yet well developed. Eliciting informed consent, negotiating access agreements, assessing the boundaries between the public and the private, and ensuring the security of data transmissions are all problematic in Internet research. Researchers who carry out research online should demonstrate that they are familiar with ongoing debates on the ethics of Internet research, and might wish to consider erring on the side of caution in making judgments affecting the well-being of online research participants.

As commented in University document ‘The Data Protection Act 1998 and Research’, ‘Stripping data of all personal identifiers will not result in true anonymisation as long as the researcher is still in possession of the original dataset. The fact that he may have no intention of relinking the two is immaterial (see the definition of Personal Data in the Appendix) – the data will still constitute personal data under the Act. If, however, the original dataset is destroyed, and only the stripped version remains, then the data will no longer fall under the Act.’ See also the section ‘Research Exemption. (Appendix 1)

(iv) Unexpected Incidents

Occasionally during research unexpected incidents happen. These may include things like (a) sudden emotion, such as tears or anger, after a seemingly innocuous remark or question, (b) withdrawal of a person into him/herself and complete silence, also after a seemingly innocuous question, (c) strong annoyance when a question is perceived as too personal or threatening, (c) a complaint made about a question or interview, (d) a person complaining of harassment, (e) a person wanting to declare things in confidence which may be criminal or manipulative of the researcher, (f) the researcher is threatened or assaulted, (g) theft of collected confidential data occurs, (h) the local situation suddenly changes in such a way that the researcher may wish to branch into a new area of research or indeed may feel acutely uncomfortable and wish to withdraw, etc, etc.

The key ethical responsibility lies with a researcher, even though the University will have given ethical approval to a project. When the unexpected happens, the researcher should use his/her own judgment in how he/she reacts, but must also at the earliest convenience contact the School of which he/she is a part, and relay the situation to them. In what may seem a major incident, the researcher must stop research immediately, withdraw and consult directly with the School. The incident must also be written up and sent to the School. In cases where the researcher wishes to change or adapt the research project or its focus, the researcher must stop his/her research, submit an ethical amendment form (form on the website) to the SEC, and await until ethical clearance has come from the SEC.

(v) Use of Photography

Publication of photos ought only to happen with the express permission of the participants. Where appropriate protecting the identity of the participants may be preferable e.g. blurring of faces.

(vi) Debriefing

Following research, especially where any deception or withholding of information has taken place, appropriate debriefing is essential. It is important for participants to know that their contribution was valued within the context of the whole research and of its outcomes, and most value knowing what they were involved in. In some circumstances, the verbal description of the nature of the investigation would not be sufficient to eliminate all possibility of harmful after-effects. For example, an experiment in which negative mood was induced requires the induction of a happy mood state before the participant leaves the experimental setting

(vii) Data Management, Preservation and Protection

See Appendices 2, 3.

For published material, this University adopts the policy stated in a recent consultative paper (*Code of Conduct and Policy on the Governance and Good Research Conduct*) by Research Councils UK, designed in part for Universities, that ‘...individual researchers should always ensure that primary material is available to be checked. Such conditions should also be applied where ownership of data may rest with third parties, for example where there is commercial sponsorship of research. Data should normally be preserved and accessible for not less than 10 years for any projects, and for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, the data should be retained

for up to 20 years, and preferably permanently within a national collection, or as required by the funder's data policy.'

This is all a very complex area and there can be layers of legislation together with sponsor guidelines and University versions that seek to provide guidance. In any uncertainty it is best to seek advice.

(viii) Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights

See Appendix 3.

(c) Relations with and responsibilities towards sponsors and funders

A common interest exists between sponsor/funding body and researchers as long as the aim of the social inquiry is to advance knowledge, although such knowledge may only be of limited benefit to the sponsor and/or funding body. That relationship is best served if work is conducted with high professional standards.

Researchers should ensure that sponsors and/or funding bodies appreciate the obligations that researchers have not only to them, but also to society at large, research participants and professional colleagues and the research community. The relationship between sponsors or funding bodies and researchers should be such as to enable social/scientific inquiry to be undertaken professionally. In research projects involving multiple funding bodies or collaboration with researchers from other institutions or departments, researchers should consider circulating this statement to colleagues as an aid to the discussion and negotiation of ethical practice.

Research should be undertaken with a view to providing information or explanation rather than being constrained to reach particular conclusions or prescribe particular courses of action. Research should not be undertaken where the researcher suspects the sponsor of having unethical motives.

Some bodies providing funding for projects may stipulate their own Ethical and Legal considerations. The researcher should be fully aware of any obligations specified by the body providing funding and the implications this may or may not have for their research and methods of research. For example, anyone with a research grant from ESRC should be aware of the implications of receiving such a grant.

(i) ESRC Funding

In a recent communication ESRC has sections on Copyright & IPR, Data Protection, Duty of Confidentiality, Deformation, Informed Consent, and please note that some of the following may apply whether or not one holds a grant. The full [documentation](#) should be read but among the key points are:

Data

- Research data is expected to be shared once anonymised with similar projects as it is 'public data'
- Permission to archive and disseminate materials must be sought from all interested parties and a covering letter confirming agreement should accompany materials when deposited
- The Data Archive may oblige that the information is shared on a wider basis
- Participants should be made aware that any data they give may be shared with more than the immediate researcher

Copyright

- In research with e.g. interviews the participant has copyright over the spoken word with the researcher having copyright over the creation of his/her work
- Where work is completed as part of employment the employing institution owns the copyright of the work

Consent

- Consent must be thought through at the planning stage otherwise secondary analysis is jeopardised
- Consent must be freely given with enough detail to indicate what has been agreed
- There must be active communication between the parties - what is expected from participants and why their participation is required
- Documentation outlining consent has to differentiate between consent to participate and consent to allow findings to be shared or published
- Consent cannot be inferred from a non-response to a communication such as a letter or invitation to participate

(ii) Clarifying obligations, roles and rights

Researchers should clarify in advance the respective obligations of funding bodies and researchers, where appropriate in the form of a written contract. Researchers should refer the sponsor or funding body to the relevant parts of the professional code to which they adhere, and be careful not to promise or imply acceptance of conditions that are contrary to their professional ethics or competing research commitments.

Researchers should clarify, before signing the contract, how far they are entitled to be able to disclose the source of their funds, the personnel, aims and purposes of the project. The right to publish and disseminate the results of the research should also be clarified.

Researchers should not accept contractual conditions that are contingent upon a particular outcome or set of findings from a proposed inquiry. While researchers have an obligation to ensure sponsors grasp the implications of the choice between alternative research methods, a conflict of obligations may occur if the funder requires particular methods to be used. These issues should be resolved before undertaking research.

Where some or all of those involved in the research are also acting as sponsors and/or funders of research the potential for conflict between the different roles and interests should also be made clear to them.

Researchers should recognise their own general and/or specific obligations to the sponsors, whether contractually defined or only the subject of informal or unwritten agreements. They should be honest and candid about their qualifications and expertise, the limitations, advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of analysis and data sources, and acknowledge the necessity for discretion with confidential information obtained from sponsors.

(iii) Guarding privileged information, negotiating problematic sponsorship

Researchers may be furnished with information (e.g. by the sponsor) that is legitimately confidential and should remain so. Methods and procedures that have been utilised to produce published data should not, however, be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed.

When negotiating sponsorship researchers should be aware of the requirements of the law with respect to the ownership of and rights of access to data.

In some political, social and cultural contexts some sources of funding and sponsorship may be contentious. Candour and frankness about the source of funding may create problems of access or co-operation for the researcher but concealment may have serious consequences for colleagues, the discipline and research participants. The emphasis should be on maximum openness.

Where sponsors and funders also act directly or indirectly as gatekeepers and control access to participants, researchers should not devolve their responsibility to protect the participants' interests

onto the gatekeeper. Researchers should be wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between participants and gatekeepers since that will continue long after the researcher has left.

(iv) Obligations to sponsors and funders during research process

Researchers have a responsibility to notify the sponsor and/or funder of any proposed departure from the terms of reference of the proposed change in the nature of the contracted research.

A research study should not normally be undertaken where it is anticipated that resources will be inadequate. When financial support or sponsorship has been accepted, researchers must make every reasonable effort to complete the proposed research on schedule, including reports to the funding source.

Researchers should, wherever possible, disseminate their research findings as widely as possible and where required make their research data available to other researchers via appropriate archives. Disseminating this data should follow the guidelines regarding confidentiality above. Researchers should normally avoid restrictions on their freedom to publish or otherwise broadcast research findings.

(v) Obligation of Accepting an Award

The objective of sponsors guidelines/award terms normally include that results and datasets produced from publicly funded research are made publicly available. However within individual projects there may be good reasons to anonymise datasets and results and there may be a requirement or possible need to keep certain information confidential – also to seek and obtain consent from the subjects who provide the data for its use and dissemination (of course some subjects may object to this and therefore not participate in a study).

In accepting an award the institution and researcher(s) accept the terms and conditions which include guidance on making public the datasets and results of the project. Intellectual property rights can normally be dealt with in delaying the public release of information or datasets, so of themselves do not stop nor curtail the availability of information to the public. There would however be a breach of the terms of the grant if the intent was to keep datasets out of the public archive for a period of time far in excess of researchers' interests in analysing the data. If it was only during the period of their gathering and analysing the data within the project then under normal academic and research practice it would be permissible to delay the availability of the research data to the public and other researchers. In the case of another researcher seeking access to a dataset produced from a project this would be at the discretion of the dataset provider and under normal academic principles of collaborative research based on mutual trust etc, and may additionally be provided under a material transfer or data access agreement if that were appropriate.

If for any reason a researcher determines that making datasets and results public would compromise their ability to undertake a study for the which they seek funding, then it is good practice to make this clear at the application stage so that if an award is made there is some form of dialogue between sponsor and researcher that modifies the 'standard' terms of grant and agreement of what (if any) results or datasets would not available publicly.

If a researcher determines in an on-going awarded project that the requirement to make results and datasets publicly available hampers their ability to collate the information required for a successful project then this issue should be raised as it occurs with the sponsor and agreement then reached on how best to deal with it.

This is all a very complex area and there can be layers of legislation together with sponsor guidelines and University versions that seek to provide guidance. In any uncertainty it is best to seek advice.

(d) Relations with and responsibilities towards colleagues and disciplines

Researchers derive their status and certain privileges of access to research participants and to data not only by virtue of their personal standing but also by virtue of their professional citizenship. In acknowledging membership of a wider community, owe various obligations to that community and can expect consideration from it.

(i) Individual responsibility

Researchers bear responsibility for the good reputation of their disciplines and practitioners. In considering their methods, procedures, content and reporting of their enquiries, behaviour in the field and relations with research participants and field assistants they should therefore try to ensure that their activities will not jeopardize future research.

(ii) Conflicts of interest and consideration for colleagues

It should be recognised that there may be conflicts of interest (professional and political) between researchers, particularly between visiting and local researchers and especially when cross-national research is involved. Consideration for, and consultation with, researchers who have worked or are working in the proposed research setting is advisable and is also a professional courtesy. In particular the vulnerability of long-term research projects to intrusion should be recognised.

In cross-national research, consideration should be given to the interests of local scholars and researchers, to the problems that may result from matters such as the disparities in resources available to visiting researcher, and to problems of equity in collaboration. As far as is possible and practicable, visiting researchers should involve local scholars in their research activities but should be alert to the potential for harm that such collaboration might entail in some contexts.

(iii) Sharing research materials

Researchers should give consideration to ways in which research data and findings can be shared with colleagues and with research participants. As far as possible, research findings and data should be made available where the research took place (if necessary, these should be translated into local languages). Complementary copies of reports and off prints should also be disseminated.

Researchers should be alert, though, to the harm to research participants, collaborators and local colleagues that might arise from total or even partial disclosure of raw or processed data or from revelations of their involvement in the research project. Where the sharing with colleagues of raw, or even processed, data or their (voluntary or obligatory) deposition in data archives or libraries is envisaged, care should be taken not to breach privacy and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity, and appropriate safeguards should be devised.

(iv) Collaborative and team research

In some cases researchers will need to collaborate with researchers in other disciplines, as well as with research and field assistants, clerical staff, students, and etcetera. In such cases they should make clear their own ethical and professional obligations and similarly take account of the ethical principles of their collaborators. Care should be taken to clarify roles, rights and obligations of team members in relation to matters such as the division of labour, responsibilities, access to and rights in data and field notes, publication, co-authorship, professional liability, and etcetera.

Where research is being done in collaboration with other Universities full ethical approval should be gained from the University at which the lead researcher is based. Researchers based at St Andrews University should submit the first and signature page of the UTREC Ethical Application Form, along with the approval letter and approved ethical application from the lead researcher's institution.

(v) Responsibilities towards research students and field assistants

Academic supervisors and project directors should ensure that students and assistants are aware of the ethical guidelines and should discuss with them potential (as well as actual) problems that may arise during fieldwork or writing-up.

(e) Relations with own and host governments

Researchers should be honest and candid in their relations with their own and host governments. Researchers should seek assurance that they will not be required to compromise their professional and scholarly responsibilities as a condition of being granted research access. Research conducted outside one's own country raises special ethical and political issues, relating to personal and national disparities in wealth, power, and the legal status of the researcher, political interest and national political systems. Researchers should bear in mind the differences between the civil and legal, and often the financial, position of national and foreign researchers and scholars. They should also be aware that irresponsible actions by a researcher or research team might jeopardise access to a research setting or even to a whole country for other researchers.

Researchers should note that there may be a number of national laws or administrative regulations which may affect the conduct of their research, matters pertaining to data dissemination and storage, publication, rights of research subjects, of sponsors and employers, etcetera. They should also remember that, save in a few exceptional circumstances; social research data are not privileged under law and may be subject to legal subpoena. Such laws vary by jurisdiction. Some which may have consequences for research and publication in the U.K. are, for example, the Data Protection Act, law of confidence, Race Relations Act, defamation laws, copyright law, law of contract, and the Official Secrets Act; in the U.S.A. particularly important are the federal regulations governing human subjects' research, the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Copyright Act.

Resources and Guidelines

Given the diverse nature of research projects undertaken in the various Schools, below is a set of ethical guidelines used by different disciplines. As mentioned above, some of these have been used to create this document for the University, based on the document created for the School of Geography & Geosciences (these are marked with **).

Ethical guidelines²

Association of American Geographers, *Statement on Professional Ethics*
<http://www.aag.org/Publications/Other%20Pubs/EthicsStatement.html>

**Association of Social Anthropologists – Ethical Guidelines
<http://www.theasa.org/ethics.htm>

American Institute of Chemists – Code of Ethics
<http://www.theaic.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=46>

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology – Code of Ethics
<http://www.asbmb.org/ASBMB/site.nsf/web/035D570E3A8E81FA85256C7C00535A61?opendocument>

**American Sociological Association Code of Ethics
<http://www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html>

**British Sociological Association – Statement of Ethical Practice
<http://www.britisoc.org.uk/about/ethic.htm>

Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists – Code of Ethics
<http://www.cseg.ca/membership/ethics.php>

Ethical Guidelines for International Comparative Social Science Research in the framework of Management of Social Transformation (MOST) <http://www.unesco.org/most/ethical.htm>

European Federation of Geologists – Code of Professional Conduct
<http://www.asbmb.org/ASBMB/site.nsf/web/035D570E3A8E81FA85256C7C00535A61?opendocument>

EU's RESPECT code for social research in the Information Society
www.respectproject.org

Medical Research Council http://www.mrc.ac.uk/index.publications/publications-ethics_and_best_practice.htm

Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities
 Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities
<http://www.etikkom.no/Engelsk/NESH/Publications/NESHguide>

Oral History Society Guidelines
<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/ethics/ethics.html>

² The Ethical Guidelines are mainly appropriate to the School of Geography and Geoscience although there are some additions from other areas. Each School is invited to insert Guidelines appropriate to its own School.

Research Councils UK, Code of Conduct and Policy on the Governance of Good Research Conduct: Integrity, Clarity and Good Management (consultative document)

Social Anthropology Guidelines
<http://www.theasa.org/ethics.htm>

The British Psychological Society Guidelines for Minimum Standards for Ethical Approval in Psychological Research (this can be borrowed from the UTREC secretary) . Also Code of Ethics and Conduct. Also Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants.

**The Social Research Association's Ethical Guidelines
<http://www.the-sra.org.uk/Ethicals.htm>

Tri-Council Statement on Ethics for Research by Canadian Research Councils www.sshrc.ca or
<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm>

Selected Bibliography³

Below is a select list of reading materials that might prove useful in thinking about the ethical dimensions of your research. If you would like to recommend useful references for inclusion here, please contact the Secretary of UTREC so that they might be included in this document.

- Bradshaw, M. (2001) 'Contracts and Member Checks in Qualitative Research in Human Geography: Reason for Caution?' *Area* 33(2): 202-211.
- ESRC Research Ethics Framework Project (2004) 'Implementing the ESRC Research Ethics Framework: The Case for Research Ethics Committees', Discussion Paper 4, http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/docs/REFpaper4_v2.pdf.
- Freed-Taylor, M. (1994), 'Ethical considerations in European cross-national research', *Social Science Journal* 142:523-532, <http://www.unesco.org/most/ethissj.htm>.
- Furedi, F. (2002) 'Don't rock the research boat', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, January 11, page 20.
- Gordon, E. (2003) 'Trials and Tribulations of Navigating IRBs: Anthropological and Biomedical Perspectives of "Risk" in Conducting Human Subjects Research', *Anthropological Quarterly* 76(2):299-320.
- Hay, Iain (1998) 'Making Moral Imaginings: Professional Research Ethics, Pedagogy, and Professional Human Geography', *Ethics, Place and Environment* 1(1):55-76.
- Nuffield Council on Bioethics (2002) *The ethics of research related to healthcare in developing countries*, Nuffield Council on Bioethics: London.
- Marshall, P. (2003) 'Human Subjects Protections, Institutional Review Boards, and Cultural Anthropological Research', *Anthropological Quarterly* 76(2): 269-85.
- Proctor, J. D. (1998) 'Ethics in Geography: Giving moral form to the geographical imagination', *Area* 30:8-18.
- Shea, C. (2000) 'Don't Talk to the Humans: The Crackdown on Social Science Research' *Lingua Franca* 10(6), September, <http://www.linguafranca.com/print/0009/humans.html>.
- Thrift, N. (2003) 'Practising Ethics', in M. Pryke, G. Rose and S. Whatmore (eds) *Using Social Theory: Thinking through Research*, London, Sage:105-21.

³ The Selected Bibliography is mainly appropriate to the School of Geography and Geoscience although there are some additions from other areas. Each School is invited to insert the Selected Bibliography appropriate to its own School

Appendix 1: The Data Protection Act (1998) & Research

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/sec/

Appendix 2: Economic & Social Data Service

www.esds.ac.uk/aandp/create/ethical.asp

Appendix 3: Economic & Social Data Service

www.data-archive.ac.uk/about/about.asp