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Research Ethics Policy	LS035	1.0	
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# RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

## Policy Statement

Activate Learning is fully committed to the advancement of high-quality academic research and to ensuring that all activities are undertaken in a way that safeguards the dignity, rights, health, safety, freedom of expression and privacy of those involved. This commitment extends to participants, researchers, students and third parties and as a Steering Group member of the Research College Group.

## Purpose

This Policy (and associated procedure) provides a framework for decision making on ethical issues that aims to safeguard and protect the rights of researchers and research participants undertaking research.

## Benefits

There are many benefits from having a policy that sets out recommendations on research ethics practice. The Policy (and associated procedure):

- a. Sets out Activate Learning's overall position on research ethics
- b. Provides a framework to support Activate Learning in maintaining high ethical standards
- c. Helps to embed a culture based upon best practice principles, therefore strengthening Activate Learning's commitment to high-quality, transparent, and accountable research practices.

## Scope

This Policy applies to all Activate Learning employees engaged in research, higher education (HE) students of Activate Learning and other individuals who are undertaking research using Activate Learning premises or facilities and/or Activate Learning's name.

This Policy and associated procedures do not currently cover research with animals which may cause pain, suffering, distress, or lasting harm to the animal(s) in line with the Animal Scientific Procedures Act (1986).

Where ethical approval has been obtained from another institution e.g., a university, further approval is not required unless Activate Learning staff and/or students are recruited as participants.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Activate Learning's Research Ethics Procedures which set out the general framework for ethical conduct in relation to research activities and the Data Protection Policy, both of which are published on Activate Learning's SharePoint site.

## Responsibilities

The Research Ethics Committee has an oversight of all ethical considerations and will monitor and review the activities and resources used to support, implement, and embed the highest standards of research integrity in accordance with Activate Learning's own requirements and those of awarding, professional and regulatory bodies.

The Research Ethics Committee reports to the HE Academic Board of which the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee are both members.

The primary responsibility for the conduct of ethical research lies with the researcher. It is a fundamental principal of Activate Learning that all staff and higher education students engaged in research adopt a continuing personal commitment to act ethically, to encourage ethical behaviour in those with whom they

collaborate, to be aware of subject-specific ethical guidelines and to consult where appropriate concerning ethical issues. Activate Learning is fully committed to ensuring that all staff and higher education students are fully appraised of their responsibilities in this regard.

The Research Ethics Committee will also make available via the Applied Learning Foundation's website, reference material on ethical guidelines, examples of research undertaken, and undertake appropriate training on ethical issues.

## Principles

Researchers must abide with the following principles which underpin the ethical conduct of research:

- a) Researchers should avoid, prevent, or minimise harm to others in the widest sense. Participants should not be subjected to unnecessary risks or discomfort and their participation in the project must be essential to achieving aims that could not be realised without their participation. The principle of minimising harm also requires that the minimum number of participants that will ensure valid data should be employed.
- b) The physical, mental and social well-being of the participant should be promoted. Protection of the participant is the most important responsibility of the researcher.
- c) Ethics concerns minimisation of risk and weighing risk against benefits. All researchers should be aware of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of their work and should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own ethical actions.
- d) Everyone involved in a research project should be treated fairly. Researchers should weigh up and make judgements about competing claims and interest of all involved in the research, regardless of the vested interests of the researchers. Participants should be selected in an equitable way avoiding populations that may be coerced into taking part. There should be equality in distributing benefits and risks among the population group(s) likely to benefit from the research.
- e) Participants must give their informed consent before taking part in a study. Valid consent must be given voluntarily (not forced by coercion or manipulation) by participants who are competent (not undermined by mental status, disease, or emergency) and given sufficient information (i.e., informed) to make the judgement.
- f) Researchers should take precautions to protect confidentiality of participants and data. Standards of privacy and confidentiality protect the access, control and dissemination of personal information.
- g) Respect for human dignity entails an ethical obligation towards vulnerable people or groups whose diminished decision-making capacity makes them vulnerable. Vulnerable people include children, prisoners and adults with mental health problems or learning disabilities. The consent of individuals in a potential dependency relationship where there is an imbalance of power (e.g., students, patients and employees) should be carefully considered as their willingness to participate may be unduly influenced by the relationship.
- h) Research must be undertaken in accordance with any relevant law or legislation including those from other countries, if relevant.
- i) Projects are approved for a stated time period. Any extensions for an additional time period or any major divergence from the approved project must be subject to further ethical approval.
- j) Researchers' contributions are acknowledged within Activate Learning, particularly where the research outcomes inform ongoing policy and practice.

For participant recruitment at external institutions, any additional guidelines specified by that institution must be followed and appropriate authorisation obtained.

**Failure to follow Activate Learning's Research Ethics Policy and/or Procedures may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with the Student Code of Conduct or the Professional Conduct Policy for staff.**

If there is any cause for concern or complaint about the way approved research is conducted, stakeholders are encouraged to use the process as set out in the Research Ethics Procedures.

## References

[British Educational Research Association \(BERA\)](#)

[Health Research Authority \(HRA\)](#)

[Research College Group](#)

## Appendices

[Research Ethics Procedure - Staff .pdf](#)

[Research Ethics Procedure - Students .pdf](#)

[Research Ethics Procedure - Reviewers .pdf](#)

