

Research Ethics

Quality assurance – Research ethics

Quality Assurance in Research (QAR) at Freshart College comprises all the techniques, systems and resources that are deployed to give assurance about the care and control with which research has been conducted. It applies to all those who conduct research at the College including visiting workers, and is revised annually after consideration by the appropriate committees.

QAR is typically concerned with:

- the responsibilities of those involved in the research
- transparent project planning
- the training and competence of research staff
- facilities and equipment
- documentation of procedures and methods
- research records
- the handling of samples and materials

Research ethics

Research allows you to discover new ideas and expand your understanding of different subject areas. It's about asking questions and finding answers, and it will form an essential part of your education, especially as you advance through higher education studies.

All research raises ethical issues, and therefore research proposals are scrutinised to ensure that they meet ethical standards for research. The review process is designed to ensure that researchers protect the health, well-being, dignity and rights of research participants, and the legitimate interests of other stakeholders.

At Freshart College we highly value integrity and ethically responsible research. The college strives to maintain scientific integrity and to make decisions in research based on high ethical standards. For example when it comes to research involving human participants or personally identifiable data, or animal testing.

Research ethics is concerned with the protection of human participants in scientific research projects. Informed consent by these participants is a cornerstone of ethical acceptability of research.

Research Ethics is a globally recognised set of principles governing the way research involving the interaction between a researcher and other humans, their tissue or data, is designed, managed and conducted. These principles apply equally to all researchers, including our members of staff as well as our undergraduate students and are essential to support good quality research.

Although the origins of formalised research ethics can be found in the medical world (e.g. the regulation of medical research involving patients and healthy volunteers), the general principles have much wider scope and are applicable much more widely to, for instance, include research into the social sciences where interactions with individuals, defined groups or their data are involved.

Many professional and research organisations across a range of research disciplines have issued formal research ethics guidance.

The College expects all researchers to consider the ethical implications of their research and to be aware of their responsibilities to society, the environment, their profession, the College, research participants and the organisation(s) funding the research.

Research ethics cover the whole research cycle:

- design of the research project,
- data collection,
- safe storage of any resulting personal identifiable information.

Scope, purpose and terms of reference

1. to assess the ethical propriety of all research using human subjects human personal data to be undertaken at, by, or under the auspices of the College, however funded.
2. to have discretion on behalf of the College and, in the light of ethical considerations, to require such modifications as it may think fit before allowing the research to proceed.
3. to offer advice to Heads of School and investigators on the ethical implications of proposed research and to encourage high standards of ethical behaviour in College research involving humans.
4. to monitor at its discretion the progress of research projects submitted to it by means of reports or in other ways and, if necessary, to suspend or terminate such research if required on ethical grounds.

General Principles

Although the specific number of research ethics principles can vary between sources, they are broadly grouped under the following headings:

1. **Respect for autonomy**: The participant must be able to choose whether to take part in the research without coercion or penalty for not taking part. They must also be free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without detriment to themselves or any services or treatment they are receiving.
2. **Beneficence**: The research must be worthwhile in itself and ensure that any beneficial effects outweigh any possible risks; it follows that the methodology must be sound so that the result will yield meaningful or statistically significant results.
3. **Non-maleficence**: Any possible harm to the participants or researcher must be avoided or mitigated by robust precautions.
4. **Justice**: Research participants must be recruited fairly and not exploited.
5. **Confidentiality**: The right of the participant to ensure their personal data are kept safe, stored securely and shared only with members of the research team for the purposes of the project (unless the participant agrees otherwise).
6. **Integrity**: The researcher must be transparent regarding any known personal, financial, institutional or other gains, they are due to make from the research, acknowledge the relevant contributions of third parties involved in the project and ensure that research outcomes are disseminated appropriately.

These principles ensure that the welfare, self-determination, privacy and legal rights of both the participants and researchers are protected.

Requirement for Ethical Review

Freshart College defines research as primary data collection or secondary data analysis which will lead to:

- The advancement of knowledge or understanding in a given subject area
- The confirmation of results or reaffirmation of previous work
- The development of new theories

It may also include exercises to train a student in the techniques of gathering and analysing data, synthesizing ideas and scholarly report writing if forming part of their dissertation/thesis/final year project.

Roles and Responsibilities

The College's Ethics Committee undertakes an ethical review of any relevant research project in the College with a view to:

- maintaining ethical standards of practice in research;
- protecting participants of research and researchers from harm;
- preserving the participants' rights and welfare;
- and providing reassurance to the public and to outside bodies that this is being done.

The Committee will grant each research project one of the following opinions:

- a favourable ethical opinion,
- a provisional favourable ethical opinion subject to a specified list of revisions
- or an unfavourable ethical opinion

Researchers and supervisors:

It is the responsibility of staff researchers, student researchers and their supervisors to plan and conduct their research within the parameters of ethical practice and with integrity.

This includes:

- Ensuring that any ethical implications of the research have been given proper consideration.
- Ensuring that any risks inherent in the research have been given proper consideration and an appropriate risk assessment has been carried out.
- Ensuring that the project has had an academic review (appropriate to the nature of the Project).
- Checking guidance on whether ethics approval is required.
- If ethical approval is required, ensuring this is sought and received prior to the commencement of recruitment of participants or data collection.
- Ensuring that any applications for ethical review are complete, well-written, and contain all the supporting documentation.

Data Management Plan

A clear and explicit understanding of the way human data will be managed (collected, used, stored, shared and disposed of) in a research project is an essential part of ethical review. Freshart College reassures itself of this important aspect by requiring that a Data Management Plan (DMP) be submitted as a component part of the research projects.

Gaining and evidencing the informed consent of the participants is central to the ethical conduct of human-based research. An appropriate informed consent procedure is a pre-requisite to a favourable opinion. Conventionally, and most conveniently, this is done by providing prospective participants with a comprehensible (i.e. written in lay language) participant information sheet (PIS) and then requiring them to sign a consent form

Data Protection and Research

Personal data used for research purposes must be used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.