
Research Ethics Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. The College is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and principles in the conduct of its research. The Research Ethics Policy sets out the principles underpinning the ethical conduct of research and defines the process and principles for the objective and rigorous ethical review of research which falls within its scope.
- 1.2. The Research Ethics Policy must be read in conjunction with the Research and Scholarly Activity Policy, which sets out the College's commitment to research integrity. All City of Bristol College researchers should aim to protect the integrity and reputation not only of the college but also of the educational research community.
- 1.3. Researchers are expected to familiarise themselves with the Research Ethics Policy and observe the principles and procedures to embed good ethics practice in all aspects of their work before commencement of and during the conduct of the research.

2. Scope

2.1. The Policy applies to all researchers, supervisors and students conducting research within the College.

This includes:

- Staff in any part of the College provision (teaching, training and assessing, business support, management and senior leaders)
- Staff visiting from other institutions undertaking or supervising research at or for the College (to include university and subcontracting partner organisations)
- All students
- Volunteers and students on Initial Teacher Training programmes

3. Definitions

3.1. We define **research and scholarship** as an activity or activities with the potential to:

- create or affirm knowledge and/or expertise of a subject or discipline
- create and pursue new knowledge to enhance teaching and learning
- develop curricula through advancing knowledge in the subject area
- raise awareness amongst students of research, enabling them to challenge research and making them research active
- enhance the student experience by providing a scholarly environment, thus enabling the achievement of the best outcomes possible and increasing employability
- enhance the reputation of the college and contribute to retaining Silver TEF award
- Raise the national profile of HE in FE

3.2. Activities should be designed to have demonstrable impact on the student learning experience and the College academic and professional community, through research led and research informed learning, teaching and assessment.

3.3. These activities should be carried out with an ethic of respect for all persons – including themselves and City of Bristol College – involved in the research they are undertaking. Individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice.

4. Guidelines

4.1. Consent

- 4.1.1. Voluntary informed consent should usually be obtained at the start of the study.
- 4.1.2. Participants should understand what is involved in a study. They should be told why their participation is necessary, what they will be asked to do, what will happen to the information they provide, how that information will be used and how and to whom it will be reported.

4.2. Transparency

- 4.2.1. Researchers should aim to be open and honest with participants.
- 4.2.2. It should be made explicit to participants where research has been sponsored or commissioned and in any subsequent report or publication.
- 4.2.3. Researchers should not undertake any work in which they may be perceived to have a conflict of interest, or if self-interest or commercial gain might compromise the objectivity of the research.

4.3. Right to Withdraw

- 4.3.1. Researchers should recognise the right of all participants to withdraw.
- 4.3.2. This can be at any time, for any or no reason. Participants should be informed of this right. Researchers should always provide their own contact details to participants. In all such circumstances researchers should examine their own actions to assess whether they have contributed to the decision to withdraw.

4.4. Incentives

- 4.4.1. Incentives should be used with good sense.
- 4.4.2. The level of incentive should not impinge on the free decision to participate. Incentives should be disclosed in any publications.

4.5. Harm Arising from Participation

- 4.5.1. Researchers have a duty of care in recognising potential risks.
- 4.5.2. Researchers should consider any actions occurring during the research process that may cause emotional or other harm.
- 4.5.3. The more vulnerable the participants, the greater the responsibilities of the researcher for their protection.

4.6. Privacy and Data Storage

- 4.6.1. The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research.
- 4.6.2. Researchers should recognise the entitlement of both the College's and individual participants to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. This could involve employing 'fictionalising' approaches when reporting, and researchers should fully explain how and why they have done so in their writing.

4.6.3. Researchers should ensure that data are kept securely, and that the form of any publication (including those published online) does not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

4.7. Disclosure

4.7.1. Researchers may consider disclosure if illegal activities are taking place or if someone is at risk of harm.

4.7.2. Researchers should carefully consider making disclosure to the appropriate authorities or seek advice from a relevant responsible person.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Researchers:

- To complete a research ethics proposal form and submit to the Research Ethics Committee (REC)
- To ensure that ethical approval has been granted prior to commencement of primary research
- To report any changes in methodology, methods and participants which will have ethical implications, to their research supervisor and/or the REC for re-approval
- To adhere to ethical protocols throughout the project
- To be aware that referrals will be made to the if it suspected that research has been brought into disrepute or misconduct has occurred (projects cannot continue if ethical approval has been withdrawn or suspended)
- To adhere to decisions made by the supervisor and/or the REC as these are binding; failure to comply with decisions may be regarded as ethical misconduct.

5.2. Research Ethics Committee:

- To be chaired by the Assistant Principal FE&HE, supported by the Teaching & Learning Manager and appropriate staff members
- Meet regularly to consider research ethics proposal forms for researchers. This can be done virtually or via email communication if the required
- To ensure that the college ethical guidelines are universally applied across the college by providing and updating procedures and documentation
- Monitor the adherence to the Research Ethics Policy and the underpinning BERA Guidelines

Linked Policies

Research & Scholarly Activity Policy

Review Frequency

Three years

Senior Manager Responsible

Assistant Principal for FE & HE