

Section 3

Research should not cause harm to participants or researchers, and preferably it should benefit society

Any potential risks such as physical, social or psychological distress to participants and researchers, whether directly or indirectly involved, which might arise in the course of the research should be identified.

Procedures must be justified, explaining why alternative approaches involving less risk cannot be used.

The potential benefits of the research must be clearly stated but not overestimated.

Any cultural, religious, political, social, gender or other differences in a research population should be sensitively and appropriately handled by researchers at all stages of the research.

Section 4

Potential participants normally have the right to receive clearly communicated information from the researcher in advance

Most research procedures should be explained on an information sheet written in simple language that is easily comprehensible by any potential research participant.

The information sheet should set out the purpose of the investigation; the procedures; who will have access to the data; the risks; the benefits or absence of them to the individual or to others in the future or to society; a statement that participants may decline to participate; ways to withdraw from the research; an invitation to ask questions and contact details for the researchers. More information can be found in [Research Guidance Note 3](#).

Participants should be given plenty of time to study the information sheet and to ask questions from relevant parties as needed and provided with a copy of the sheet.

The information sheet and the consent form (see [Research Guidance Note 3](#) for examples) should form part of any application for ethics approval.

Researchers should maintain records of consent to participate.

Section 5

Participants should be free from coercion of any kind and should not be pressured in a study

Inducements, such as special services or financial payments (other than reimbursement for travel expenses or, in some cases, time) and the creation of inappropriate motivation should usually be avoided.

Risks involved in participation should be acceptable to participants, even in the absence of inducement.

Reimbursement of participants' expenses, for example travel expenses, is not payment in the sense of reward, and can be provided.

Researchers should consider the implications for the quality of consent from participants who are in a potentially dependent relationship with the researcher (for example, students, employees and patients). These groups may require careful consideration, as willingness to volunteer may be unduly influenced by the expectation of advantageous benefits or fear of consequences arising from not participating.

Section 6

Participants in a research study have the right to give their informed consent before participating

Participants should understand the purpose and nature of the study, what participation in the study requires, and what benefits are intended to result from the study.

Voluntary informed consent should usually be obtained in writing from any participant who is able to give consent. A copy of the consent form should be provided to each participant.

Participants must be given information on ways to withdraw from the study, along with information on when it may no longer be possible for their data to be removed (for example, after publication or after submitting an anonymous online survey response — see [Research Guidance Note 4](#)).

‘Consent to process’ may need to be obtained where information collected from individuals is to be used later for research purposes.

Research involving children under 18 years will usually require the informed consent of parents or other legal guardians. [Research Guidance Note 5](#) gives more information on working with vulnerable groups and outlines exceptions to gaining informed consent of parents.

Young persons of 16 years and over are generally thought to be able to give informed consent, but this will vary depending on the nature of the research and advice may need to be sought.

Where third parties such as school or care staff are affected by the research, consent should be obtained from these third parties.

Consent should be confirmed before the completion and return of any online survey questionnaires, removing the need for written consent.

[Research Guidance Note 4](#) outlines good practice in using online survey tools.

Individual consent may be unnecessary for some research activities, such as community research, which may be quite unobtrusive (for example, studies involving observation of public behaviour). Unobtrusive observation and the method used to record such research data may still carry risks which must be considered. Researchers are encouraged to seek advice from relevant ‘gatekeepers’ if they are considering this type of research. More information can be found in [Research Guidance Note 3](#).

Section 7

Honesty should be central to the relationship between researchers, participants and other interested parties

The use of covert research or deception of participants must be clearly justified and would require prior approval from the School or University Research Integrity Committee.

If covert research or deception is necessary, the reasons should be explained to participants after the study when appropriate.

Researchers should not actively deceive or passively mislead participants just because of an expectation that their prior permission will not be obtained.

Researchers must provide convincing reasons why such covert research should proceed without informants' proper consent, and how the likely benefits outweigh the lack of informed consent by research subjects.

The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

Section 8

Participant's confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained

Researchers should take precautions to protect the confidentiality of participant's data; at both an individual level as well as at an organisational level (for example, a company's identity may also need to be protected).

The identity of participants should not be revealed unless their written permission is obtained in advance of the study commencing.

When personal identifiers are used in a study, researchers should explain why this is necessary and how confidentiality would be protected. Where possible, participants identified should have the right to view identifying information prior to its dissemination.

Researchers should be aware of the risks to anonymity, privacy and confidentiality posed by all kinds of information storage and processing, including computer and paper files, email records, photographic material, audio and videotapes, or any other information which directly identifies an individual. Further information can be found in [Research Guidance Note 6](#).

When considering conducting research that may raise issues of illegal activity or may cause professional harm, researchers must apply for approval from the School or University Research Integrity Committee.

Section 9

The use of research data should adhere to our Research Data Management policy and the Data Protection Act 1998

As research data is at the very core of evidencing research quality and integrity, it is vital that robust research data management policies and procedures are in place to ensure that research conducted by, and under the auspices of, Edinburgh Napier University meets the highest standards to comply with legislative, regulatory, audit, funding body, partner (stakeholder) and internal requirements.

Researchers should ensure they comply with Edinburgh Napier University's Research Data Management Policy³ and the university's Data Protection Code of Practice⁴ and associated guidance, particularly sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 20.

Participants must be informed of the kinds of personal information which will be collected, what will be done with it, and to whom it will be shared or disclosed. Researchers should put in place methods of data disposal that ensures the principle that personal data is kept secure and meets the University's requirements for the Safe Disposal of Confidential Waste⁵.

Researchers should be aware that research data may be requested under Freedom of Information legislation. Researchers in this instance should seek advice from Governance Services as exemptions may apply.

³ Edinburgh Napier University 'Research Data Management Policy' (2015). Available at <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/Documents/Research%20Data%20Management%20Policy.pdf> [last accessed December 2015]

⁴ Edinburgh Napier University 'Data Protection Code of Practice' (2012). Available at <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/secretary/governance/DataProtection/Documents/CoP/Code%20of%20Practice%20Revised%20April%202012.pdf> [last accessed December 2015]

⁵ Edinburgh Napier University 'Guidance on the Safe Disposal of Confidential Waste' (2011). Available at <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/secretary/governance/DataProtection/Documents/Safe%20Disposal%20of%20Confidential%20Waste%202015-04-08.pdf> [last accessed December 2015]

Section 10

Researchers have a duty to disseminate their research findings to all appropriate parties

Researchers should share findings openly and promptly, as soon as they have had an opportunity to establish priority and ownership claims.

Edinburgh Napier has an Open Access policy⁶ which encourages researchers to make any publications open access through the ‘green’ open access route. This ensures compliance with HEFCE’s Open access policy for the next Research Excellence Framework⁷.

Researchers should consider any confidentiality agreements with funders or other stakeholders, or the need to protect data ahead of any patent applications when deciding on the timescale for dissemination of research findings.

Reports to the public should be clear and understandable, and accurately reflect the significance of the study.

⁶ Edinburgh Napier University’s Open Access policy 2015. Available from <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/policies/Documents/OPEN%20ACCESS%20policy%20Final%202015.pdf> [last accessed December 2015]

⁷ HEFCE ‘Policy for open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework: Updated July 2015’ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/Year/2014/201407/> [last accessed December 2015]

Section 11

Researchers should take responsibility for their contributions to all publications, reports and other representations of their research

Lists of authors should include all those, and only those, who meet applicable authorship criteria. Guidance on authorship criteria has been created by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)⁸

Issues about joint ownership of work by students and supervisors should be discussed at an early point in the research cycle, and confirmed or renegotiated later, as work is written for publication. Edinburgh Napier University's Intellectual Property Policy⁹ gives further information.

Researchers should acknowledge in publications those who have made significant contributions to the research but do not meet authorship criteria — including writers, funders, sponsors and others.

⁸ A position statement on 'Responsible research publication: international standards for authors' (2010) was created at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity, Singapore, 2010. Available at http://publicationethics.org/files/International%20standards_authors_for%20website_11_Nov_2011.pdf [last accessed December 2015]

⁹ Edinburgh Napier University 'Policy for the Ownership and Exploitation of Intellectual Property' (2006). Available at <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/rkt/commercialisation/Documents/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy%20May%202006.doc> [last accessed August 2013] Link broken – will identify new location for IP policy

Section 12

Researchers should report any suspected misconduct to the appropriate authorities

Research misconduct can take many forms including fabrication, falsification or plagiarism, and other irresponsible research practices that undermine the trustworthiness of research such as carelessness, failing to report conflicting data, or the use of misleading methods.

The mechanism for reporting an allegation of misconduct is outlined in [Research Guidance Note 7](#).

Allegations of research misconduct by a member of staff will be initially investigated by the University Research Integrity Committee, and any cases of misconduct would then be dealt with under the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

Allegations of research misconduct by a research student will be considered a matter of Academic Misconduct and would therefore be subject to investigation under the Student Disciplinary and Fitness to Practise Regulations.