

# Higher Education Research Ethics Policy



## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy has been designed to ensure that proper consideration has been given to any ethics issues raised from primary research undertaken by Higher Education students studying at Weymouth College.

## 2. Reason For The Policy

- 2.1. As part of Higher Education programmes delivered at Weymouth College students may be required to undertake primary research for the completion of their studies. The foremost consideration of this research should be the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of people who take part. The interests and safety of the researchers themselves should also be considered.

## 3. Policy Objectives

- 3.1 To enable students to meet ethical standards in conducting research for higher education courses.
- 3.2 To ensure that staff supervising higher education students are appropriately trained to support students in meeting these standards.

## 4. Policy

- 4.1 All research supervisors (i.e. staff delivering research project modules or similar) will be given the opportunity to attend a staff development session on identifying and managing ethical concerns in research.
- 4.2 Research that meets the specified criteria will be reviewed by a Research Committee which is made up of higher education programme leaders, lecturers and students. All Research Committee members will have the opportunity to attend a staff development session as detailed above. The committee must be satisfied that the risks, burdens and intrusions to participants of the research will be minimised and justified by the expected benefits, prior to any primary research being undertaken.
- 4.3 The specified criteria for Research Committee review include circumstances such as:
- Primary data will be obtained through observation or surveying of colleagues or the general public;
  - Any potential for incitement or discrimination;
  - Subjects may be degraded or exploited;
  - Potential for offence or damage to third parties (malicious or otherwise);
  - The age or characteristics of any subjects may give rise to safeguarding concerns;
  - Potential hazards to human or animal welfare;
  - Potential damage to infrastructure or the natural environment;
  - A risk of reputational damage to Weymouth College;
  - Ambiguity regarding the legal status of the research;
  - Reliance upon existing research which raises any of the above concerns.
- 4.4 For a committee meeting to be quorate, at least three committee members must be present, to include a Joint Chair and one other member of staff. All committee decisions must be unanimous.

Policy Title:	Higher Education Research Ethics Policy	Policy Owner:	Assistant Principal, Higher Education
Status:	Final	Policy Author:	Programme Leader HE Business
IA Required Yes or No due regard given	Due regard Dec 2016	Author Approval Date:	December 2016
Yes - EIA Date:		Review Date:	December 2019

- 4.5 All committee members present are required to declare any interests they may have in the research under consideration. In the event that one or more committee members declares an interest, they may be replaced by another committee member to ensure impartiality.
- 4.6 The research supervisor will identify if any research proposed by their students meets the criteria detailed above. The member of staff will then notify a Joint Chair of the Research Committee in advance of the research proposal submission deadline.
- 4.7 A Joint Chair of the Research Committee will make arrangements for the Research Committee to meet shortly after the research proposal submission deadline, ensuring quorum as detailed above.
- 4.8 The students' research proposal will be provided to the Research Committee for consideration, and the student in question or the research supervisor will attend the meeting to respond to questions about methodology if a need is identified.
- 4.9 The Research Committee will decide one of the following outcomes:
- Approve  
The Committee are satisfied that the research poses no significant ethical concerns, or are satisfied that the methodology addresses any significant ethical concerns.
- Action  
The Committee approves the proposed research subject to the student to altering their methodology or focus to address an identified risk.
- Refer  
The Committee believes the research poses significant ethical concerns that cannot be rectified by altering the methodology, and invites the student to submit an alternative research proposal. Research Supervisors will be encouraged through staff development to support students in selecting research questions that are unlikely to be referred.

## 5. Definitions

- 5.1. The College defines primary research as “the gathering of new information (including but not limited to data), through methods such as observation, surveys and interviews.”

## 6. Policy Owner

- 6.1. Assistant Principal, Higher Education

## 7. Who Will Need To Know About This Policy

- College staff with involvement in Higher Education programmes, particularly those with responsibility for supervising primary research
- Higher Education students undertaking primary research
- Employers and other organisations involved in or supporting primary research
- Primary research subjects

## 8. Responsibility

- 8.1. Assistant Principal, Higher Education

## 9. Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Assessment Policy - HE

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## 10. History

This policy was adopted and approved on:

Signed: *Nigel Evans*

Date: *27 March 2017*

Nigel Evans, Principal

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