



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

Academic Ethics Policy

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Owner: Director Research and Enterprise

Research and Enterprise Division

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Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised & Date
Research Governance & Policies Manager	<i>Minor updates to text throughout for clarity; addition of item 2.d and of Definitions (Section 5.0); updates to URLs and job titles.</i>	V1.2	Academic Ethics Committee 28/04/21
Research Governance Officer	<i>Updates to Section 4.0</i>	V1.1	Academic Ethics Committee 29/04/20
Associate Director Research	<i>New document with input from QEO, and consultation across the University</i>	V1.0	Academic Ethics Committee 28/06/17
Policy Management and Responsibilities:			
Owner:	This Policy is issued by Research & Enterprise, which has the authority to issue and communicate policy on academic ethics.		
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.		
Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:			
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR) Equality Assessment form	1. <i>Completed with HR representative 02/06/2017</i>		
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Information Governance (LPG)	3. <i>Draft passed to Legal & Governance, comments incorporated</i>		
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The owner and author are responsible for publicising this policy document.			

1.0 Purpose

This policy sits under the University's Ethics Framework, Research Code of Practice and the policies contained in the Academic Handbook.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an academic ethics policy which underpins the conduct of the University's academic activities to ensure these activities are conducted to the highest ethical standards.
- Set out ethics principles and responsibilities, outline the ethics review policies and procedures that will be employed to ensure the ethical integrity of these academic activities, and to act as a signpost to the other existing and relevant policies.
- Ensure that academic freedom and endeavour are supported and maintained through proportionate levels of scrutiny in relation to the assessment of risk arising as a consequence of the proposed academic activities.

2.0 Scope

- a. This policy applies to the academic activities of research, enterprise, consultancy, and teaching and learning. It does not apply to non-academic issues concerning business partnerships, procurement or investment. Responsibility for such issues sits with the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (GNEC) of Council and the University Ethics Framework.
- b. This policy applies to all University staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, holders of honorary and clinical appointments or contracts, contractors and consultants and others working on or off University premises or carrying out academic activities in the name, or on behalf, of the University of Salford. It applies across all subject disciplines and fields of study, including instances where the University of Salford is not the lead partner.
- c. This policy applies to all staff members and students who undertake academic activities on University premises or with University owned or hosted equipment (including cloud-based software) but not in the name of the University of Salford. These individuals are expected to adhere to the principles, standards and procedures outlined in this policy and related procedures, even if ethics review and approval has been undertaken by their home institution.
- d. Any academic activities undertaken and completed prior to the first publication of this policy is not subject to the policy and its contents. However, any or all research undertaken, even in part, after the first publication of this policy is subject to its contents in their entirety. All academic activities are subject to the conditions of the policy version live at the time of ethics approval.

3.0 Policy Statements

3.1 Commitment

As set out in our Charter, "*the objects of the University shall be to advance education and knowledge by teaching and research, and in doing so to foster an academic environment which is enterprising and applied to business and the professions, for the benefit of society at large*".

The University is committed to fulfilling that purpose only in ways that comply with broad obligations to social responsibility, including the protection of human rights, civil liberties, the natural environment and health and wellbeing, maintaining and promoting the highest standards of integrity, rigour, honesty and transparency in its creation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge and learning, and all related academic activities.

3.2 Principles of good ethics standard

- a. In addition to the principles and ethical requirements set out in the University's Ethics Framework and Research Code of Practice, the following principles apply to the management of participation in any academic activities. These are summary principles; detailed responsibilities are outlined in the named related procedures (see Related Documentation, 4.0).
- b. This Academic Ethics Policy, and all related policies and procedures, align with both statutory and regulatory requirements, and also with the standards and codes of practice outlined by the professional bodies with whom we work on a general or subject-by-subject basis.
- c. Whilst the University advocates proportionate and appropriate ethics review, there are academic activities where ethics issues will need particular consideration. The University of Salford is committed to safeguarding the interests of staff, students, partners, research participants and all others engaged with, or affected by, its academic activities. All academic activities are considered against the potential risks outlined below in the context of current Health and Safety legislation and the University's Health and Safety Policy (see 4.0), and the potential vulnerability of research participants. This principle takes into account considerations which must take precedence over academic, or any other, factors or interests. These considerations include (but are not restricted to):
 - The dignity, interests, rights, safety and wellbeing of all actual and potential research participants, observers and all others involved in the academic activity
 - The welfare and interests of those carrying out the activity
 - The welfare and interests of the University's partners and collaborators and the individuals associated with those organisations
 - Animal welfare
 - Cultural heritage
 - The natural environment
 - The reputation of the University and the wider academic community
 - The welfare and interests of the wider community
- d. Academic activities should be designed, reviewed and undertaken in adherence to the appropriate standards of quality, integrity, ethical governance, and legal compliance. Where academic ethics review and approval is required, this must take place before the activity commences.
- e. The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants, and participants' right to anonymity, must be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the University's Data Protection Policy. Where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that where behaviours or activities which are issues of safeguarding or are potentially or actually illegal are discovered in the course of a project, these may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities.

- f. Those responsible for academic activities should plan in advance how potential incidental information relating to the welfare or interests of participants in academic activities, or third parties, are to be handled in accordance with professional and legislative requirements. This plan should be considered as part of the formal academic ethics review (such as a Safeguarding Plan for Research, see 4.0).
- g. All data and other materials from and about research participants in academic activities will be collected, managed, processed, retained, stored, and disposed of in accordance with current legislative requirements and the University Information Governance policies. Particular care must be taken when collecting, handling and storing sensitive, classified and/or personal data (see Definitions, 5.0). Such data must be kept securely and protected from unauthorised, accidental or malicious access, supported by a clear and documented access control procedure for granting and revoking access to the data. This procedure must be considered as part of the formal academic ethics review process (Data Management Plan, 4.0). All such data should be disposed of appropriately and securely at the end of their lifespan, in line with legal and funder requirements.
- h. Where the academic activity involves vulnerable groups (see 3.2 j), care must be taken to safeguard participants' welfare, including Disclose and Barring Service checks where appropriate. This should not be seen as a barrier to including such groups in the activity.
- i. All those engaged with the academic activity must normally be informed fully about the nature, purposes, methods and intended possible uses of the activity, what their participation in the activity entails, and what risks and benefits are involved. This information should be accurate, clear, and easily understood by the potential research participant, who should have the ability to understand what is involved in their participation. Academic activities proposing variation from this principle may be approved only in very specific contexts which the lack of proper information, or the inability of the research participants to comprehend the information, must be justified by the value of the activity. Evidence of the provision of information and participant acceptance must be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other regulatory or funder requirements (see also Records Retention Schedule, 4.0).
- j. The University of Salford promotes inclusion of all those who may benefit from its academic activities, however careful consideration must be given to academic activity which involves:
 - Human participants, including gathering of data using interviews, questionnaires, observation and testing
 - The use of personal data from living and recently deceased people
 - Financial inducements to participation in academic activities
 - The collection of human or animal tissue, or other samples
 - Vulnerable, or potentially vulnerable, groups including (see also Safeguarding Policy, 4.0), but not restricted to:
 - Children (under the age of 18)
 - People with learning or communication difficulties
 - People for whom English is not their first language and/or people who are unable to readily understand the language used in the academic activity
 - Patients or clinical populations and/or their carers
 - Pregnant women or participants in academic activities relating to conception or contraception

- People who are recently bereaved
 - People in custody or any other form of detention
 - People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking)
- k. Participants in academic activities must be able to consent to participation in a voluntary way, free from coercion, undue influence, or manipulation. Use of inducements to encourage participation must be considered and approved as part of the formal academic ethics review process and be carefully monitored as part of this process.
- l. Participants in academic activities should be informed in advance of any controversial or sensitive materials or topics which have the potential to cause offence or distress, and must be given the opportunity to opt out, or to view alternative materials (where possible).
- m. Any conflicts of interest or partiality must be disclosed in accordance with the Declaration and Managements of Conflicts of Interest Policy (4.0). Publication of results or other outcomes of academic activities must be done fairly and with the public good taking priority over private interests.
- n. The University does not prohibit academic activities involving any country, organisation or sector however all academic activities should adhere to the University's Ethics Framework (4.0).
- o. All academic activities which are of a controversial and/or security sensitive nature should follow the University's ICT Acceptable Use Policy (4.0) and are subject to an agreement with Digital IT's Information Security Team, which should be detailed in the formal academic ethics review process.
- p. Ethics review and approval pathways will be determined by the nature of the proposed academic activity, regardless of the type of academic activity or level of study of the students involved. Teaching and learning activities are also subject to review through the formal academic ethics review process. All new or substantially altered modules must undergo a process of formal academic ethics review and will be referred by the Quality and Enhancement Office (QEO) to the relevant school ethics panel. Modules must be rereviewed every five years or after every substantial change to content or delivery, whichever occurs first.
- q. The default position is that written consent is required from research participants in academic activities, and/or their appropriate representatives. Where this is not possible, the method by which consent will be obtained and recorded, and/or the justification for exception must be reviewed and approved as part of the formal academic ethics review process.
- r. Any academic activities involving the use of human tissue and fluid samples must undergo rigorous internal and external ethics scrutiny and control, and must comply with all statutory legislation and codes of practice including the [Human Tissue Act \(2014\)](#) and the [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act \(2008\)](#).
- s. The University does not permit research or experimentation on live vertebrates and cephalopods on its premises. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure, in the case of research on animals undertaken on behalf of the University either by a third party or in external organisations, that the methods used adhere to the principle of [Replacing, Refining and Reducing](#) the use of animals for research purposes, and that all statutory controls and codes of practice are observed by the third party organisation, including the [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act \(1986\)](#).

- t. All academic activities involving non-human genetic resources (GR) or associated traditional knowledge (aTK) accessed on or after 12th October 2014 must comply with the [Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization \(ABS\)](#).
- u. Any academic activities involving public engagement must be subject to formal academic ethics review.

3.3 Academic Ethics Management

- a. All academic activities (2.0) which involve the principles outlined in 3.2 should undergo formal academic ethics review and sign-off and must adhere to the University's Ethics Framework. Individuals are required to determine whether their activities fall within the scope of this Policy, and where this is the case, the activities should be formally reviewed and signed off through the University's governance structures (see 3.4) before the activities take place, and with regards to the degree and risk (including the impact and/or likelihood) of potential harm (see 3.2). The purpose of ethics review is to ensure that academic activities are undertaken from a place of sound ethical basis and to ensure that the University can defend work carried out in its name and on its premises.
- b. Retrospective ethics approval is not permitted under any circumstances.
- c. It is essential that the University is aware of all projects with ethical implications being undertaken in its name or on its premises. Where activities require ethics approval by an outside body (e.g. the NHS, the EU or a partner organisation), it is still necessary for them to be reviewed by the relevant internal panel. This enables any issues of fundamental or specific concern for the University to be identified and addressed before details are submitted for external sign-off. The final outcome of, as well as any subsequent amendments to, ethics scrutiny by any outside body must be reported back to the relevant School Ethics Panel and/or committee for final ratification and recording.
- d. Records pertaining to Academic Ethics management and review will be retained by the Academic Ethics Team in Research and Enterprise in line with appropriate internal data storage and destruction policies. It is, however, the responsibility of the individual researcher (student or staff) to retain their own copies of such records, adhering to appropriate internal data storage and destruction policies and external legislation.

3.4 University Academic Ethics Governance and Approval Structures

The management of academic ethics review and approval processes for academic activities is outlined in the University's Scheme of Academic Governance (4.0).

The purpose and Terms of Reference for each Committee/Panel outlined in Fig. 1 (see Appendix 2) are provided in the University's Scheme of Academic Governance and can also be found at:

- [Senate and its Committees](#) (internal access only)
- [Council and its Committees](#) (internal access only)
- More information Academic Ethics, Research Governance and associated procedures can be found on the [Staff Academic Ethics Hub](#) and [Student Academic Ethics Hub](#) (both internal access only)

3.5 Roles and Responsibilities

The Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Enterprise has overall responsibility for academic ethics through delegated authority to the Chair of the University Academic Ethics Committee and a designated committee structure.

a. The University is responsible for:

- Maintaining and managing academic ethics and governance frameworks
- Providing an approved structure for the leadership and management of academic ethics to ensure that the highest standards of ethics are maintained at the University of Salford
- Creating and maintaining an environment where it is safe to report any breaches in ethical standard, using accessible processes including the Code of Conduct for Students, the Whistle Blowing Policy, the Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Research Misconduct Policy) and the Academic Misconduct Procedure (see 4.0)

b. All staff, students and individuals outlined in section 2.2 are responsible for:

- Demonstrating a personal ethical standard and delivering academic activities in a manner which maintains sound ethical behaviour and University culture, in line with the principles outlined in section 3.2
- Following the appropriate University procedure for obtaining ethics guidance and approval to proceed with academic activities
- Recognising that ethics approval can take time, especially for highly sensitive activity, and for ensuring that in planning their work they allow sufficient time to obtain academic ethics approval before commencing the proposed activity
- Reporting any breach in ethics standards as outlined in this Policy, the Research Code of Practice, the Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Research Misconduct Policy) and the Academic Misconduct Procedure

c. Supervisors of postgraduate research students are responsible for:

- Providing guidance and assistance to ensure ethical design, conduct and dissemination of their students' academic activities
- Providing considered sign-off of their students' applications to academic ethics panels in accordance with agreed timescales

d. Supervisors of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme students are responsible for:

- Providing appropriate ethical guidance and taking all reasonable precautions in ensuring that students' academic activities are conducted ethically
- Taking the role of Principle Investigator in any research, with the student acting as Co-Investigator
- Providing considered sign-off of their students' applications to academic ethics panels in accordance with agreed timescales

e. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme students are responsible for:

- Complying with the requirements of module-level ethics approval and seeking further academic ethics approval if their proposed academic activities change or demonstrate an ethical element not considered and approved within the module-level ethics approval

- Prompt reporting to their supervisor(s) or Module Lead of any problems they face complying with the requirements of academic ethics approval
 - Keeping their supervisor(s) apprised of the status of their ethics application, as provided on the Ethics App
 - Where relevant and appropriate, maintaining records of academic ethics approval and related documentation
- f. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught programme Module Leads are responsible for:
- Obtaining module-level ethics approval for modules where there are, or may be, ethical dimensions or considerations and where students are working to prescribed guidance regarding the project aims and implementation
- g. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught Programme Leaders are responsible for:
- Ensuring that their programmes' aims, learning outcomes and delivery are aligned with the University's expectations around ethical undertaking of academic activities, including formal academic ethics review
 - Upholding all appropriate policies and regulations which apply to their students and/or programmes

3.6 Policy Enforcement

Breach of this policy in terms of either the general ethics standard or specific process will be considered as having the potential to bring the University and its employees into disrepute and managed in that context. Specific processes will be brought to bear in this context, including the Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Research Misconduct Policy), the Academic Misconduct Procedure and the University's Disciplinary Policy.

3.7 Policy Promotion and Training

- a. The University is responsible for providing support for those in key leadership roles within the governance structure for ethics, including committee and panel members, ensuring that they have access to the necessary knowledge and skills training in order to perform their role effectively. It also takes the lead on bringing this policy to the attention of all those to whom it applies and ensures that there are adequate provisions made for providing training and development for staff and students in the principles and application of ethics policy to enable staff and students to understand what is expected of them.
- b. The Research and Enterprise Division will be responsible for staff and postgraduate research student inductions in relation to academic ethics and the promotion of the Academic Ethics Policy and related training materials.
- c. The Human Resources (Development) Division is responsible for the delivery of mandatory online training materials.

4.0 Related Documentation

Internal Websites (the Hub)
Academic Ethics Staff website
Academic Ethics Student website

Academic Handbook
Code of Practice for the Conduct of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes
Information Governance website
Programme Development and Review Procedures and Guidance
Quality Enhancement Office
Senate and Committees website
Student Facing Procedures website
Policies and Procedures (all internal)
Academic Misconduct Procedure
Data Protection Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Health and Safety Policy
ICT Acceptable Use Policy
Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Research Misconduct Policy)
Programme Approval, Amendment, Review and Withdrawal Policy
Programme Monitoring and Enhancement Procedure

Records Retention Schedule
Register of Interests, Gifts, Hospitality Policy (Declaration and Management of Conflicts of Interest)
Research Code of Practice
Safeguarding Guidance for Research
Safeguarding Policy
Student Disciplinary Procedure
Scheme of Academic Governance
University Ethics Framework
Whistle Blowing Policy
Terms of Reference
Academic Audit Sub-Committee
Academic Ethics Committee
Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC)
Collaborative Provision and Partnerships Sub- Committee
Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee
Research and Enterprise Committee
School Ethics Approval Committee (p.25)
School Ethics Approval Panel for Taught Programmes (p.34)
School Research, Enterprise and Engagement Ethics Approval Panel (p.33)

[Student Experience, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee](#)

Related external legislation, policies and information

[Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act \(1986\)](#)

[Data Protection Act \(2018\)](#)

[Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

[Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act \(2008\)](#)

[Human Tissue Act \(2004\)](#)

[Nagoya Protocol \(Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD\)](#)

[Nagoya Protocol \(UK: BEIS/DEFRA\)](#)

5.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Term	Definition
Honorary Contract	<p>A formally recognised appointment arranged by an authorised individual that may be paid or unpaid and permanent or temporary, either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To undertake a specified piece of work/research, OR b) Following a process of nomination by a Dean(s) of School and the Vice Chancellor, and sign off by the Vice Chancellor <p>and in both cases where the appointee undertakes work on behalf of the University.</p>
Human Participant	<p>A human participant is any research participant engaged for/recruited onto a research study. Recruitment and/or engagement may be face-to-face, online, over the telephone, through responding to a questionnaire or survey, involving invasive or non-invasive research methods through qualitative or quantitative research.</p>
Informed Consent	<p>A potential research participant must be given all the information about the what the research involves and what their involvement</p>

	<p>will entail before they can give informed consent. Consent must be voluntary.</p> <p>How informed consent is sought and recorded may depend on the nature of your research; whichever process is used should be clearly outlined in the associated ethics application. However, item 3.2 q of this policy states that the default position is written consent.</p>
Minor, or Child	A human being under the age of 18 (see UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, OHCHR, ' Convention on the Rights of Child ').
Personal Data	The University adheres to the Information Commissioner's Office definitions of personal data .
Research Participants (also referred to as "participants")	Study participants. Individuals recruited to a research study by means of providing data, testing a product, providing insight and opinions on a specified matter for the purposes of informing an academic activity being undertaken as research. This may be in a clinical setting, focus group, on film, or a recipient of a survey or questionnaire, etc.
Vulnerable individual	<p>Vulnerable populations in the context of research refer to those whose circumstances may cause them to be susceptible to undue influence. This can include (but is not limited to) physical or mental health, age or social position. A non-exhaustive list of vulnerable groups is given in this policy, item 3.2 j</p> <p>The Care Act (2014)</p> <p>NHS England Safeguarding Adults</p> <p>GMC Consent to Research</p>

Appendix B: Figure 1, Senate and its committees

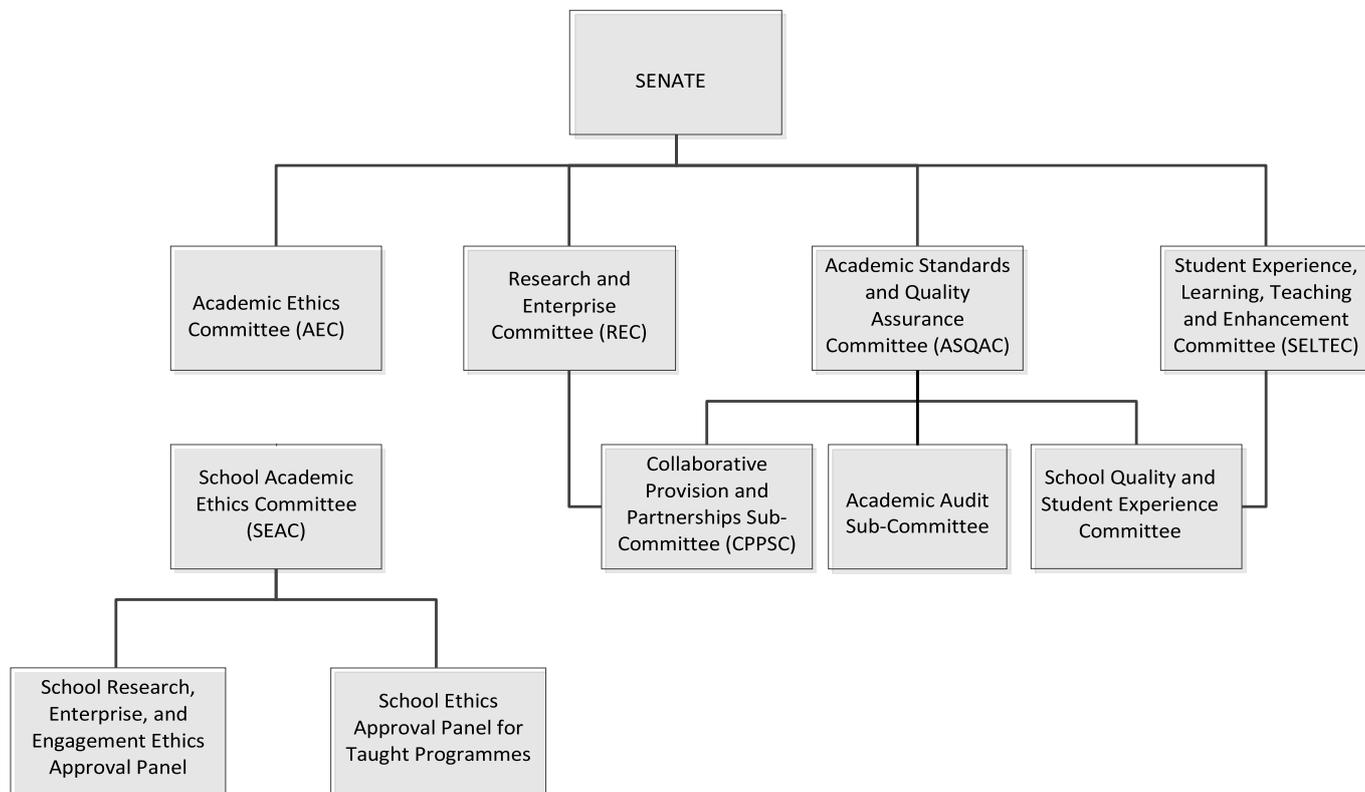


Figure 1 above