

RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

Introduction

Research ethics govern the standards of conduct for scientific researchers. It is essential to adhere to ethical principles in order to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants.

It is the policy of the RCC to ensure all research that it approves, supports, promotes and/or publicises has been reviewed by a competent ethics committee to ensure that appropriate principles of ethical research are upheld.

Principles of ethical research

This Policy recognises and advocates the following key principles of ethical research:

- **Beneficence and non-maleficence:** The research aims to maximise benefit for individuals and society, and minimise risk and harm.
- **Objectivity:** Bias in experimental design, data analysis, data interpretation and peer-review is acknowledged and minimised.
- **Integrity:** The research is conducted with integrity and transparency.
- **Informed consent:** Participation is voluntary and appropriately informed, with the right of withdrawal.
- **Anti-discriminatory:** Researchers act in a manner that is respectful of participants and compliant with relevant equality laws.
- **Dignity:** The rights, privacy and dignity of all stakeholders and participants are respected.
- **Intellectual property:** Patents, copyrights and other forms of intellectual property are recognised and honoured.
- **Honesty:** Data, results, methods and procedures are reported honestly.
- **Protecting anonymity:** The findings from research are communicated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of participants.

Research ethics committees (RECs)

This Policy advocates that RECs should have a balanced membership and include individuals with backgrounds relevant to the areas of research to be reviewed. Furthermore, committees should be large enough to ensure multiple perspectives are considered.

Wherever possible, membership of RECs should include:

- individuals with scientific expertise, including lay people whose primary role is to share their insights about the communities from which participants are likely to be drawn;
- lay people and other members who feel comfortable voicing their views;
- people who are not affiliated with organisations that sponsor, fund, or conduct research reviewed by the REC.

Sources and further information

World Health Organisation. Ensuring ethical standards and procedures for research with human beings. <https://www.who.int/activities/ensuring-ethical-standards-and-procedures-for-research-with-human-beings>

UK Research and Innovation. Framework for Research Ethics. <https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/framework-for-research-ethics/our-core-principles/#contents-list>

Public Health Notes. Research Ethics: Definition, Principles and Advantages. <https://www.publichealthnotes.com/research-ethics-definition-principles-and-advantages/>

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. What is ethics in research & why is it important? <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis/index.cfm>