

# A Guide to the Access to HE Ethics guidelines in Primary Research

Gateway Qualifications' Access to HE Diplomas provide learners with the opportunity to undertake research in an academic subject linked to the Diploma title or the learner's HEI destination course.

These guidelines are produced to support the development of a clear policy and set of guidelines within institutions for Access to HE learners who are planning to conduct primary research involving individuals.

Access to HE providers should have a research ethics policy, support and guidelines for learners in place to ensure primary research is conducted appropriately.

## Policy and Guidelines requirements:

### 1. Institutional policy

---

Institutional policy should demonstrate a procedure to authorise and monitor the aims and methodology of any primary research being undertaken by a learner against a set of clear ethical guidelines.

The procedural element of such a policy should include:

- The requirement for the identification of a named supervisor who assumes responsibility for approval/rejection of primary research proposals, and recommendation of appropriate ethical guidelines relevant to the learner's chosen field of research
- Monitoring and final assessment confirmation that the primary research undertaken by the learner has met ethical guidelines

### 2. Learner Guidelines

---

Suggested guidelines and examples of websites supporting ethical research procedures are provided in Appendix A which may be used as stated or adapted to complement or integrated into an existing institutional set of guidelines.

- Staff supervising research projects must have procedures in place to review research proposals and to approve or reject the learner's proposed procedures before the research commences.
- Supervising tutors should provide guidance with respect to any specific ethical guidelines relating to the field within which the learner plans to research.
- The learner should present the supervising tutor with agreed research proposal documentation, which should include a review of ethical considerations. A template has been included in Appendix B which may be used as presented or adapted to address ethical issues which the research may raise.

## Appendix A: Exemplar guidelines for Access to HE learners undertaking research

---

The following guidelines present the key principles and suggested minimum requirements of good practice for any research project undertaken and requirements for an ethics review.

“The principal ethics consideration should be to ensure the maximum benefit of the research whilst minimising the risk of actual or potential harm. Ethical procedures should seek to protect, as far as possible, all groups involved in research including participants, researchers and research teams” *Economic & Social Research Council (2015)*<sup>1</sup>

Your ethics review should address the broad principles in research ethics. You will need to be able to explain how:

- **you ensure the quality and integrity of your research** - you demonstrate that the scientific/scholarly standards of the research are of sufficiently high quality and robustness
- **you will seek informed consent** - “every person from whom data is gathered for the purposes of research consents freely to the process on the basis of adequate information. They should be able, during the data gathering phase, freely to withdraw or modify their consent and to ask for the destruction of all or part of the data that they have contributed”
- **you will respect the confidentiality and anonymity of your research respondents** - as a researcher, you “will respect the privacy of individuals, and will ensure that individuals are not personally identifiable, ... ensure that information or data collected about individuals are appropriately anonymised and cannot be traced back to them by other parties”
- **you will ensure that your participants will participate in your study voluntarily** - you may find that individuals may choose not to be involved in research
- **you will avoid harm to your participants** - they “should not be exposed to risks greater than or additional to those to which they are exposed in their normal lifestyles”
- **you can show that your research is independent and impartial** - you should ensure that you “explain the nature of the research to which participants are being asked to contribute, and to avoid any unfair, prejudiced or discriminatory practice, for example in participant selection or in the content of the research itself”.

*The Research Ethics Guidebook (2015)*<sup>2</sup> and *The British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (2010)*<sup>3</sup> Appendix B: Example Ethics Review template

---

<sup>1</sup> ESRC Framework for Research Ethics, Economic & Social Research Council (2015) at [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/\\_images/framework-for-research-ethics\\_tcm8-33470.pdf](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/_images/framework-for-research-ethics_tcm8-33470.pdf) accessed 11 March 2015

<sup>2</sup> The Research Ethics Guidebook: a resource for social scientists (2015) *What needs to go in the ethics statement* at <http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/What-needs-to-go-in-the-ethics-statement-20> accessed 11 March 2015

<sup>3</sup> The British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (2010) at [http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code\\_of\\_human\\_research\\_ethics.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_human_research_ethics.pdf) accessed 11 March 2015

## Appendix B: Exemplar Ethics Review template

Instructions: Learners should complete an ethics review, such as the one provided in the example shown below. This review may be incorporated into the main research proposal form used by institutions and should demonstrate how the research complies with the principles identified.

Name of Learner	
Date Submitted	
Course Title	
Title of Research	
Quality of research: <i>Add comment</i>	
Participant consent: <i>Add comment</i>	
Confidentiality: <i>Add comment</i>	
Voluntary participation: <i>Add comment</i>	
Risks involved in research: <i>Add comment</i>	
Impartiality of research: <i>Add comment</i>	

*For staff use:*

<b>Tutor Feedback – actions required</b>		
<b>Approved?</b>	<b>Supervising tutor name &amp; signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Y/N</b>		

## Contact details

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this policy and/or have a related query please contact the support team by:

Telephone: 01206 911 211

Email: [quality@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:quality@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

Post: Gateway Qualifications  
Gateway House  
3 Tollgate Business Park  
Colchester  
CO3 8AB