

Research Ethics for Research involving Human Participants Code of Practice¹

Introduction

CIBER adheres to the principles of research ethics as laid out by the ESRC guidelines (<https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>) and which comprise the following:

- Research participants should take part voluntarily, free from any coercion or undue influence, and their rights, dignity and (when possible) autonomy should be respected and appropriately protected.
- Research should be worthwhile and provide value that outweighs any risk or harm.
- Researchers should aim to maximise the benefit of the research and minimise potential risk of harm to participants and researchers. All potential risk and harm should be mitigated by robust precautions.
- Research staff and participants should be given appropriate information about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks and benefits, if any, are involved.
- Individual research participant and group preferences regarding anonymity should be respected and participant requirements concerning the confidential nature of information and personal data should be respected.
- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure recognised standards of integrity are met, and quality and transparency are assured.
- The independence of research should be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality should be explicit.

CIBER requires that the integrity of any research depends not only on its rigour but also on its ethical adequacy and expects that research should contribute to knowledge development. The underpinning principle of research conducted in or through CIBER is to do no harm to research participants.

Honesty

Honesty in the planning, conducting, analysing and reporting of research is required. Honesty

should be central to the relationship between researcher, participant and institutional representatives. The deception of participants should be avoided. If necessary, deception must be justified by the researchers and the reasons should be explained to participants after the study. Covert research may be appropriate within certain contexts and within certain subject areas but must be justified. However, the 'do no harm' principle must be adhered to. Any

¹ Based on Oxford Brookes University code of conduct

conflicts of interest must be declared to the research participants and in any dissemination of findings.

Coercion

Participants should be free from coercion and should not be pressured to participate in a study. Incentives for participation should be commensurate with the tasks involved. Compensation for loss of income should not be considered inducements. Reimbursement of participants' expenses, for example travel, can be provided. Risks involved in participation should be acceptable to participants, even in the absence of inducement. Participants must be free to withdraw from the study at any time, without any repercussions to the participant.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained as a core principle. Researchers and other collaborators should deal with all data obtained through their project in such a manner so as not to compromise the personal dignity of the participant or compromise the participant's right to privacy, through all the collection, storage, analysis and disposal stages of the research. All information obtained in the course of a research project should be considered privileged information and should under no circumstances be publicly disclosed in a fashion that would identify any individual or organisation except when required by law, or with the express consent of the participant. When personal identifiers are used in a study, researchers should explain why this is necessary and how confidentiality would be protected. In cases where participants' anonymity may be at risk, the participants will be informed at the outset of the research.

Consent

Participants in a research study are usually required 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. Informed consent, should usually be recorded from any participant who is able to give such consent, either by implied consent (see point c below) or explicitly. It is the researcher's responsibility to seek ongoing consent during the course of a study, as appropriate. Consent may be implied by the completion and return of survey questionnaires, removing the need for written consent.

Data protection

The processing of research information containing personal data must comply with the Data

Protection Act 1998 principles listed below. There are eight good practice guidelines which must be adhered to when processing personal data:

1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully.
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes.
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive.
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
5. Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary.
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.
7. Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken to protect personal data.

Additional care must be taken when processing sensitive personal data which may contain the following information: i. racial or ethnic origin ii. political opinions iii. religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature iv. membership of a trade union

Communication with participants

Potential participants should receive clearly communicated information from the researcher in advance. Most research should be explained on an information sheet written in clear language that is easily understood by the potential research participant. b. The information sheet should set out: the purpose of the investigation; the procedures; the risks (including psychological distress); the benefits, or absence of them, to the individual or to others in the future or to society; a statement that individuals may decline to participate and also will be free to withdraw without giving a reason; the level of feedback to be offered; the time required and an invitation to ask questions. The information sheet should also provide contact details of the Lead investigator so that participants may report any concerns about the conduct of the study. Participants should be given, under normal circumstances, a minimum of 48 hours to study the information sheet, and consult relevant parties where necessary.

Dissemination of research findings

Researchers have a duty to disseminate their research findings to all appropriate parties, Participants and relevant stakeholders will usually be offered access to a summary of the research findings where appropriate. Reports to the public should be clear and understandable and accurately reflect the outcome of the study. Research outputs should wherever possible be disseminated widely and openly to maximise their value.