ETHICS POLICY

Document Title:	Ethics Policy
Responsible Role and Department:	Dr Samantha Scallan Chair, University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
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Summary:

This *Policy* sets out the principles and expectations to ensure research and evaluation conducted at the University of Winchester is ethical in design and process, and is carried out with the highest regard for research integrity.

The accompanying *Procedures* document sets out the processes with which staff and students need to engage in order to achieve these ends. Both documents should be read alongside the University's other policies, codes, guidance and conduct documents to which they are aligned.

Equality Impact Assessment	
Summary of process undertaken to determine equality impacts:	A 'consultation approach' was adopted to consider the impact of this update in relation to equality in the first instance and more widely. The following steps were taken: • 10 half-hour 'listening events' to gather feedback (March '25 to April '25) • Request for feedback from UREC Members, cascaded to their respective Faculties • Request for feedback from members of the University via an intranet post • Request for feedback from training session attendees from January '25 • Discussion and feedback at UREC Meeting 3 (May '25)
University Committee (name/ date) where equality impacts discussed (this may be Committee of approval, or another):	Senate Research and Innovation Meeting 4 (May '25) From September '25, consideration of equality impact will be built into the annual review process and added as a standing item on the agenda for UREC Meetings

Identified equality impact(s) on colleagues and students
(i.e. any specific impacts related to this policy that may cause disadvantage for people due to one or more particular protected characteristic)

Protected Characteristic	Impact(s) identified and any action(s)/mitigation(s) to address these impact(s), as necessary.
Age	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Disability	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Gender Identity	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Marriage/Civil Partnership	None identified
Pregnancy and Maternity	None identified
Race (incl. nationality)	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership

Religion and Belief	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Sex	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Sexual Orientation	None identified. Considered in relation to Committee Membership
Impact considerations for 'the researched' or project focus	Protected characteristics, amongst other project characteristics, are used in the Form 1 checklists as a way to discern the level of risk a project may pose and the level of review required. As a Committee, we are aware that such aspects of a project need to be seen in the context of the project aims and not just in isolation. As part of monitoring, the way Form 1 is being used and interpreted by staff and students is kept under review, Where a project is submitted to the incorrect review process, then the forms and guidance will be reviewed to see if clarifications can be made to make the correct review route clearer. Similarly, as a Committee we are alert to occasions where our own biases may influence the review process, and this is an area of active and ongoing discussion.

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1.1 *Context*

This *Policy* sets out the principles and expectations to ensure research and evaluation activity conducted at the University of Winchester is ethical in design and process, and is carried out with the highest regard for research integrity. Its principles are grounded in the University's original mission – to educate, advance knowledge and serve the common good – guided by the reimagined values. These values are:

- The love of learning
- Individual and shared endeavour
- Making a difference

This *Policy* enacts these values in relation to research and evaluation, following the *Research and Innovation Strategy*. It makes explicit the requirements for the ethical conduct of research and evaluation by staff and students at the University, and the need for integrity to underpin research practice. The accompanying *Procedures* document sets out the processes to achieve these ends, and both documents should be read alongside the University's other policies, codes, guidance and conduct documents to which they are aligned.

This *Policy*, the *Procedures* and the project review process are intended to enable not inhibit research and evaluation activity. They are intended to guide researchers to identify risks, and to mitigate or manage them with integrity.

1.2 *Research Integrity*

All research conducted at the University of Winchester must be designed and carried out in accordance with relevant legislation and discipline-related ethical and professional guidance. For researchers this means they should act with honesty, integrity and in a transparent manner, respecting the dignity, rights and values of others, guided by relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

This *Policy* is aligned to *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (UKCORI 2025) which sets out five key commitments for maintaining the highest standards of research integrity:

1. The five principles: Honesty; Rigour; Transparency and open communication; Care and respect; Accountability
2. Through expectations and compliance with appropriate ethical, legal, regulatory and professional frameworks, obligations, and standards
3. By embedding a culture of research integrity in the research environment
4. By raising awareness of questionable research practices and potential research misconduct, and managing cases appropriately to promote learning
5. Promoting accountability and continuous improvement in research integrity through the use of tools, such as the *Annual Statement on*

Research Integrity, and indicators to demonstrate researcher and organisational engagement

The University advocates for an ethic of personal responsibility in the context of research integrity; this means that those conducting research or evaluation take primary responsibility for their actions through being aware of the expectations set out in this *Policy*, engaging with the *Procedures* in the accompanying document and in undertaking research and evaluation guided by the principles set out in the *Research Code of Practice* (2024) and *The Concordat* (2025). In doing so, researchers can identify the ethical issues posed by their project and give an account of their approach to managing or mitigating these issues. This *Policy* provides a framework to help do this. In the case of students, they will also be supported and guided by their supervisor(s) or tutor.

Each Faculty within the University and some Professional Services groups have staff members, researchers, postgraduate research students, taught postgraduate and undergraduate students undertaking research, therefore guidance needs to be in place to accommodate this breadth of activity and provide:
- support on matters concerning ethics, integrity and research /evaluation practice;
- a review process to establish expectations and consistency in practice in relation to ethics and integrity; and
- teaching, training, advice and guidance to promote awareness of and reflection on ethics and integrity throughout the lifecycle of a research or evaluation project.

1.3 *Support*
Within the University and each Faculty, staff engaging in research, evaluation or supervision of research must be familiar with the expectations set out in this *Policy* and abide by them as they relate to their activity. Any questions about this *Policy*, the *Procedures* or integrity issues in general should be directed in the first instance to Faculty Ethics Leads who oversee the Faculty level review process or the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

1.4 *Peer review*
The review of projects in relation to ethics and integrity is generally undertaken in one of two ways: the first is a Faculty level process and the second a University level process.

This *Policy*, the *Procedures* document and review forms will guide staff and postgraduate research students as to which is the most appropriate route for review of the project. Typically review should occur at a level as close as appropriately possible to the Department or Faculty where the project will be undertaken. The intention of this is to promote an open culture of discussion of and reflection on ethics and research integrity in line with commitments 3 and 5 of *The Concordat*.

Faculty level ethics review is intended to accommodate projects deemed relatively straightforward, and which might be considered to be of 'low risk.' Each Faculty has procedures in place for the review of projects, the nature of which will depend on the volume and character of the projects undertaken within the Faculty. Typically, the Faculty Ethics Lead or other nominated individual will oversee this process, drawing on the expertise of one or more reviewers, as appropriate. Where Faculty level review highlights a project to be more complex, of higher risk or the Faculty reviewers are unsure, then the project should be referred to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) carries out the review of projects that are deemed complex or high risk. The Committee comprises representatives from each Faculty, Professional Services and the postgraduate student body. The Committee strives to maintain a diverse and inclusive membership, balanced in terms of:

1. academic, professional and organisational perspectives which are representative of the business of the University, and
2. individuals reflecting characteristics such as age /career stage, disability, gender identity, race (incl. nationality), belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Where an imbalance in membership is identified, additional members from an under- or un-represented perspective may be co-opted or requested to participate in the review process.

The Committee convenes for formal meetings three times a year and may convene for extra-ordinary meetings as necessary. The review of projects and ethics matters is conducted virtually and asynchronously.

The remit of UREC is:

(a) To support the research and innovation activity of the University by developing policy and practice in relation to research /evaluation ethics review;
(b) To develop guidance and sustain a University-wide awareness of issues linked to research, evaluation and integrity;
(c) To provide peer review of project proposals requiring scrutiny and to indicate if the project is approved to progress or in need of further development;
(d) To support the Faculties in developing peer review processes, and providing guidance in relation to research /evaluation ethics and integrity;
(e) To provide suitable training for those engaged in research and evaluation across the University, and to identify and disseminate good practice linked to ethics and integrity;
(f) To report, on a regular basis, to Senate Research and Innovation Committee any issues relating to the University's ethics *Policy*, *Procedures* and practices;
(g) To provide advice and guidance to Deans of Faculty and members of Professional Services, as required;
(h) To investigate any concerns or complaints in relation to project ethics as set out in the *Research Code of Practice* (2024); and

(i) To seek clarification, as and when necessary, from the University's solicitors, insurance advisor, Health and Safety Team, Data Protection Team or external expert bodies on matters linked to the University's ethics *Policy*, *Procedures* and practices.

The level of review required (i.e. by Faculty or Committee) can be identified by completing Form 1. Further information is set out in the *Procedures* document.

1.5   *Training and guidance*
This *Policy*, the *Research Code of Practice* (2024) and *The Concordat* (2025) should be used to frame any training (for staff, undergraduate or postgraduate research students) or documentation concerning research /evaluation ethics.

All members of UREC, as well as Faculty Ethics Leads, postgraduate research degree supervisors and all reviewers involved in the peer review of projects are required to have undertaken appropriate training and /or to have had significant relevant research experience before taking up review responsibilities.

All degree programmes (undergraduate, master's and research degrees) must include at least one lecture, seminar or support session on research ethics where an assignment task requires the collection of data. All students undertaking research for a dissertation or thesis should have access to advice in relation to ethics from their supervisor(s) in the first instance. For further information on training, researchers should contact the Doctoral School or Chair of UREC.

1.6   *Statement of responsibilities*
Those engaged in research or evaluation have obligations to the participants in their project, to sponsors, stakeholders, employers and colleagues. Those engaged in research or evaluation should consider the ethical aspects of a project throughout its lifecycle. The lifecycle includes the planning and design stage, entering the field, engaging participants, gathering data, analysis and interpretation, the presentation of findings and follow up knowledge exchange and impact activities – from the short-term dissemination process of reporting and publication through to longer-term archiving, future use, sharing and linking of data. It is the responsibility of the researcher /evaluator, whether staff or student, to engage with the appropriate ethics process for their project and identify the nature of review needed. Where review is required, it is the responsibility of the researcher /evaluator to ensure that approval has been gained before the proposed data collection activity starts.

Failure to consider the ethical implications of research /evaluation, or failure to apply reasonable care in assessing the likely ethical implications of a project, or failure to engage in the review process, may be deemed academic and /or research misconduct.

1.7   *Oversight*

This *Policy* and its revisions are subject to oversight by UREC, which is accountable to the Senate Research and Innovation Committee and ultimately to the Executive Leadership Team.

Dr Samantha Scallan
Chair, University Research Ethics Committee
Revised: May 2025

References
UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER (2024) *Research & Innovation Enabling Strategy 2024-2028*. Winchester: University of Winchester.

UK COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY (UKCORI) (2025) *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. London: UKCORI.

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER (2024) *Research Code of Practice*. Winchester: University of Winchester.

UK RESEARCH INTEGRITY OFFICE (UKRIO) (2022) *Annual statement on research integrity template*. London: UKRIO