



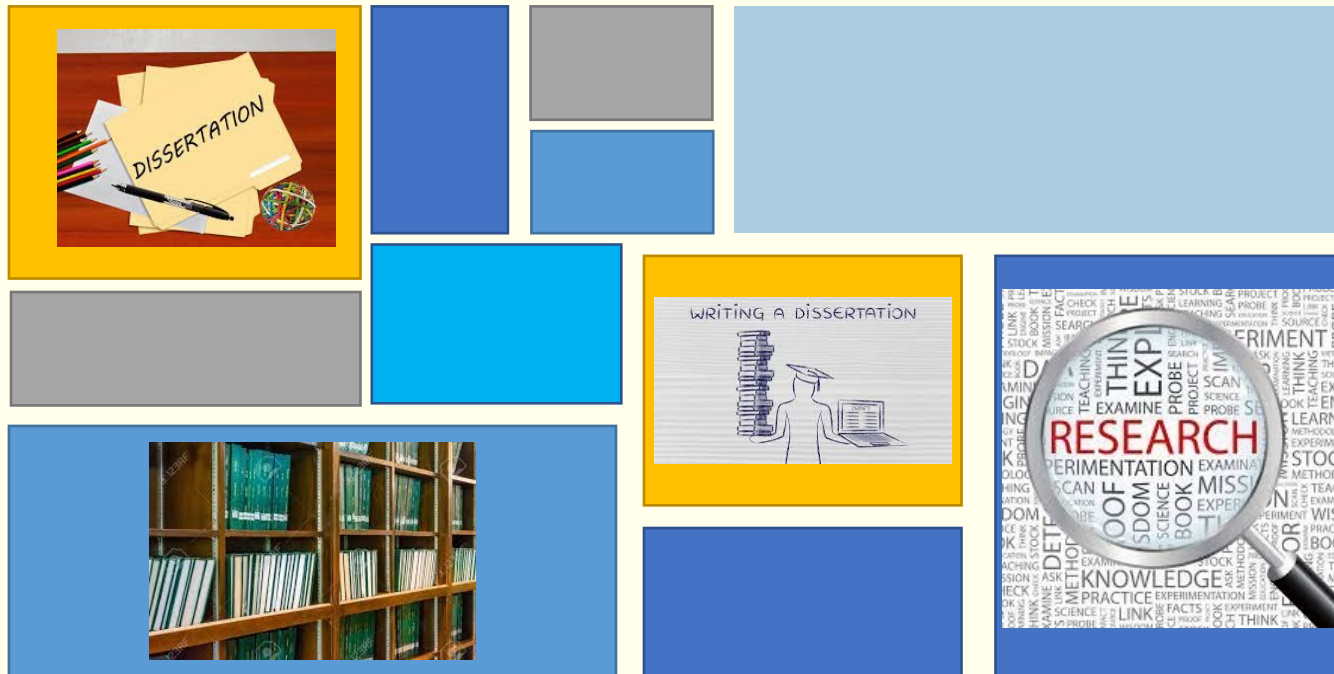
Prifysgol Cymru

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Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives



ECGE6003Q: Independent Project

Theme 2: Ethics and Ethical Approval for Research

What do we mean by 'ethics'?



*Take a moment to consider this question
and then share your thoughts with the
group.*

Ethics

*‘A branch of philosophy concerned with **moral** principles and values, with what ought to be the case and how people ought to live their lives. Ethical philosophers are concerned with the ideas of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as they apply to human affairs’*

(Scott, 2015)

Ethics and Morals

- The previous definition mentioned both **ethics** and **morals**
- These two concepts are closely related and can often be confused;

Ethics (Greek, *ethos* = character) ‘the moral principles by which any particular person is guided: the rules of conduct recognised in a particular profession or area of human life’ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (2007)

Morals (Latin, *mor* = custom) ‘Of or pertaining to human character or behaviour considered as good or bad’ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (2007)

- However, there are significant differences when we apply these terms as researchers.

Ethics and Morals

- In the context of us, as researchers, we can differentiate these two concepts as follows:
- **Morals** can be seen to be a set of **personal** values that an individual develops through the process of **socialisation**

What 'agents of socialisation' might influence an individual's moral sense?



Ethics and Morals

- Thus, **morals**, can be seen as personal judgements on the rights or wrongs of a specific issue, for example;
 - The Death Penalty 
 - Abortion 
 - Immigration 
 - Allowing 16 & 17 year olds to vote 
- Whilst, **ethics**, can be seen as a set of guidelines established by an organisation to structure professional behaviour

Ethics, Morals & the Law

- In terms of us, as researchers, we can identify three clear influences on our research, namely:
- **Morals** – our own personal standpoint on a subject or issue
- **Ethics** – the guidelines set out by organisations to structure research project
- **The Law** - requirements set out in various relevant legislation
- We will look at each of these in turn

Research: Personal Standpoint and values

- Your own moral perspective will influence the type of subject you chose to research and how you will undertake your research
- Although you will be undertaking a Literature Review you should still consider your attitude to the group or issue that you are investigating
- You need to be aware of any **moral** judgements you have made about the group or the issue
- You need to **reflect** on your attitudes in order to ensure that you are as **objective** as possible and that you do not **skew** the research as a result of **bias**

Research: Personal Standpoint and values

- This becomes even more important if you move on to undertake **empirical** research (either quantitative or qualitative)
- The researcher needs to consider the following questions:
- How do I want to be in relation to those I am studying?
- Do I want to see them as objects to be studied or agents in the research process?
- In other words, do I want to do research on people or in collaboration with people?

Research Ethics

- ‘Research ethics govern the standards of conduct for [...] researchers’.
- ‘It is important to adhere to ethical principles in order to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants’.
- ‘As such, all research involving human beings should be reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure that the appropriate ethical standards are being upheld’.
- ‘Discussion of the ethical principles of beneficence, justice and autonomy are central to ethical review’.

(World Health Organisation, 2023)

Ethical Research Guidelines

- Refers to any guidelines that are in place in order to ensure that research is undertaken in the correct manner.
- Failure to follow such guidelines can damage those being researched on both physical and mentally, for example:
 - California medical school apologizes for unethical prisoner experiments 
 - The Stanford Prison Experiment 

Ethical Research Guidelines

- The first, and most important, guidelines for you as a Student Researcher are those of UWTSD itself
- The [*Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice*](#) (UWTSD, 2022) is available online and a PDF is also available on Moodle
- This sets out the expectations of the University of all students and staff undertaking research
- You should read this and check your understanding of how it relates to your own research.
- We will return to these guidelines when we look at the Ethical Approval process at the end of this Theme.

Ethical Research Guidelines

- However, there are other professional bodies involved in researching society and bodies whose guidelines are appropriate for students of Advocacy and Sociology, these are:
- The [British Educational Research Association](#) (BERA, 2024)
- The [British Psychological Society](#) (BPS, 2021), and;
- The [British Sociological Association](#) (BSA, 2017)
- You should choose the most appropriate of these for your chosen area of research

Ethical Research Guidelines

- Also, it is most likely that the field of work that you go into after your studies will also have its own ethical guidelines, for example:
- The [British Association of Social Workers](#) (BASW)
- The [Code of Practice \(Advocacy\)](#) that forms part of the *Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014*
- The [Teacher's Standards](#) (Department for Education, 2011)
- These may be called 'ethical guidelines', a 'code of ethics', a 'code of practice' or 'professional standards' but in each case they outline what should and shouldn't be done in terms of professional behaviour

Research: Legal Requirements

The Data Protection Act (2018)

- The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- As such it sets legal requirements on any individual or organisation that collects information on other people.
- These requirements are reflected in Section J of the UWTSD Ethical Approval form which we will look at, at the end of this Theme.

Research: Legal Requirements

The Data Protection Act (2018)

- ‘Everyone responsible for using personal data has to follow strict rules called ‘data protection principles’. They must make sure the information is:
- used fairly, lawfully and transparently
- used for specified, explicit purposes
- used in a way that is adequate, relevant and limited to only what is necessary

(GOV.UK, No Date)

Research: Legal Requirements

The Data Protection Act (2018)

- ‘Everyone responsible for using personal data has to follow strict rules called ‘data protection principles’. They must make sure the information is:
 - accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
 - kept for no longer than is necessary
 - handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction or damage’

(GOV.UK, No Date)

Research: Legal Requirements

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

- ‘The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) came into force on 8th November 2006 and is applicable in both England and Wales.
- The 2006 Act essentially provides a system for employers to check the suitability of employees or volunteers, to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- The Act seeks to prevent those deemed unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults, from gaining access through work (whether paid or unpaid).
- The Act was established to try and solve the failures identified by the 2004 [Richard Inquiry](#)’.

(Law Wales, 2021)

Research: Legal Requirements

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

- 'The 2006 Act provides the legislative framework for the Vetting and Barring Scheme.
- This Scheme was originally administered by the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
- However the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the Criminal Records Bureau has since merged, creating the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in 2012.
- The DBS now administers the Vetting and Barring Scheme. The DBS decides whether an individual should be barred, to prevent them from working with children, or vulnerable adults, or both.

(Law Wales, 2021)

Other Ethical Considerations

- Essential to your own position on ethics is that you are open and honest with those you are working alongside.
- Guba and Lincoln (1989: p.122) argue that:
- ‘Deception is worse than useless to a [researcher]; it is destructive of the effort’s ultimate intent’.
- This focus on honesty is also a feature of the [Research Integrity and Ethics | University of Wales Trinity Saint David \(uwtsd.ac.uk\)](https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research-integrity-and-ethics)

Other Ethical Considerations

- Sometimes it is difficult to draw up a research proposal that meets the needs of everyone involved
- Issues of confidentiality can you offer complete confidentiality?
- Being collaborative/power relations, for example;
- Feminist ethical critiques of research question whether the research relationship is irreducibly exploitative (Wolf, 1996).

UWTSD Ethical Approval Process

- We will now take some time to look at the Ethical Approval form that you **must complete** before undertaking your research
- You must fill out **all sections** of the form (unless instructed otherwise) to show that you have considered all of the implications of your research

UWTSD Ethical Approval Process

- Within the lecture open and begin to complete your application for Ethical Approval
- The initial process in the first lecture will be lecturer led
- It is the **Applicants responsibility** to obtain approval Prior to Engaging in any Research. (This does not include exploratory reading)
- Lecture discussions and explanations will provide the basis for understanding the process of obtaining Ethical Approval.
- Students are required to read widely around this requirement.
- **Prior to the next** lecture send your 'First draft' to your Dissertation Supervisor for initial approval

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