



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Research
Ethics &
Integrity.





As a world-class research institution, the University of Sheffield aims for the highest standards in all of its research endeavours. Unimpeachable ethics are at the heart of the research process, across all of our disciplines. This booklet offers a short, clear introduction to the principles that inform the detail of the University's Research Ethics Policy. I commend them, and the Policy, to all staff and students and to everyone who is interested in the University of Sheffield's research.

Professor Keith Burnett CBE, FRS
Vice-Chancellor



The University of Sheffield aspires to produce the highest quality research.

This is not just a matter of asking the right questions, using the most appropriate procedures to seek answers to them, and communicating results as accurately as possible. Good research is also ethical research.

Sir David King, when he was the United Kingdom Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, summarised research ethics succinctly, as a combination of rigour, respect and responsibility.

These generic principles, Sir David's Universal Ethical Code, apply to all of the University of Sheffield's research activities, in all of our academic disciplines.

Rigour

Rigorous research is disciplined by honesty and integrity.

Everything we do should be as skilful and as careful as we can make it, so we should keep our techniques up-to-date, and learn new ones as appropriate. We should assist others in their professional and personal development.

We should do whatever necessary to stop corrupt practices and professional misconduct, if we encounter them, and adopt procedures to detect and discourage such practices. We should declare conflicts of interest.

We should always be alert to the ways in which research depends on and has an impact on others' work. We should respect the rights and reputations of others.



Respect

All research has implications for the lives of others, is governed by law, and can make a direct or indirect contribution to the public good. All of these considerations must be recognised and respected.

This means that we must have a care for life. We must work in ways that are lawful and that we can publicly account for. We should take account of any potentially adverse effects that our research may have on people, animals and the natural environment.

We must respect the rights and privacy of individuals.

Responsibility

This is a matter of how we communicate, how we listen to, and inform, our students, our colleagues, and the wider public.

It is a matter of encouraging, and participating in, debate about the issues that our research may raise for society. In this we must pay proper attention to the aspirations and concerns of others.

We must never knowingly mislead, or allow others to be misled, about our research or about science and intellectual inquiry more generally.

When we present and review research data, theory or interpretation, we must do so honestly and accurately.



Putting ethics into practice

The three universal ethical principles of rigour, respect and responsibility apply to all of our research.

Although each discipline has its own ethical traditions, proper ethics are the common ground on which all disciplines meet and there are general lessons to be learned by all researchers:

- Ethics is about quality and research integrity, doing the best possible research.
- Ethics is about how we conduct our research, from start to finish.
- Ethics is about how we treat those involved in, or affected by, our research.
- Ethics is about communicating our research goals, procedures and findings as clearly as possible.
- Ethics is about recognising that research is supported by, and a part of, the wider society.
- Ethics is about being principled and accountable at all times.

Ethics is not merely a matter of minimal compliance with codes and guidelines. Properly ethical research demands that ethical considerations should be in the forefront of our thinking and routinely inform all that we do.



The University of Sheffield's research ethics policy and procedures

In addition to the Universal Ethical Code, the University has in place Good Research Practice Standards and an Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue, to which all staff are expected to adhere.

Within the University's guidelines and procedures, the ethical clearance of specific research projects is managed locally, except for research in the health care and social care fields where appropriate external ethical approval should be sought.

The University's Research Ethics Committee is responsible to Senate for keeping our policy under review, in consultation with stakeholders, and promoting its communication and understanding within the University. The Committee is also the last internal forum for the resolution of difficult research ethical issues.



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Useful resources

The University's Good Research Practice Standards:

www.shef.ac.uk/researchoffice/gov_ethics_grp/grpstandards.html

University Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue:

www.shef.ac.uk/researchoffice/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/system.html

A Universal Ethical Code for Scientists:

www.berr.gov.uk/dius/science/science-and-society/public_engagement/code/index.html

