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Becoming an ethical researcherBecoming an ethical researcher

About this free course

This free course is an adapted extract from the Open University course .

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https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/becoming-ethical-researcher/content-section-overview

There you'll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

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Becoming an ethical researche

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Introduction and guidance

Who is this course for?

This badged course is open to all and can be studied on its own as a standalone course. It has wide relevance to any researchers conducting studies with human participants: social scientists, designers, engineers, environmentalists, technologists and computer scientists. It has however been particularly designed to sit alongside and feed into postgraduate (level 7) accredited modules in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Languages and Sport.

Click on these links to find out further information on the Masters in Education and Masters in Childhood and Youth. Or you can email WELS-ECYS-Masters@open.ac.uk.

Regardless of whether you study this course on its own or as part of a masters course, you will be eligible for an Open University badge if you complete all of the activities and quizzes.

Studying this course alongside Masters in Education or Masters in Childhood and Youth modules

Students who intend to study on the Masters in Education or Masters in Childhood and Youth will be expected to study this badged course in preparation for their assessment on the final, stage 3 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth module E822.

Students who register for Masters modules receive tutorial support and access to a wide range of resources and tools, including support for developing critical engagement with ideas and information, reflecting on learning (including its professional application) and the collaborative co-creation of knowledge between participants studying the Masters modules. If you choose to go on to study any of the Masters modules, you will be able to adapt the knowledge gained from studying this badged course to your own thinking about ethics in the context of research design and development as relevant to your module, whether desk or field-based.

The Masters programme recruits for an October start each year. You will need to have accessed your My OpenLearn profile and downloaded your badge as a PNG file or your statement of participation as a PDF to submit your badge for use towards the first assessment on E822.

What is a badged course?

While studying *Becoming an ethical researcher* you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission *to promote the educational well-being of the community*. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning. In this case the course is linked to masters study in the School of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport.

To complete this course you will need to find around 18 hours of study time over a period of about six weeks. It is possible to study the content at any time, and at a pace to suit you. However, to get the most out of the discussions and interactive activities, we recommend that you aim to engage with these by following the session by session schedule.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's OpenLearn website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University Undergraduate or Postgraduate modules because you do not receive support from a tutor. However, you will benefit from interactions with other course participants and are provided with useful feedback from your responses to the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a way of demonstrating online that you have gained skills and understanding. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivator, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses.

How do I achieve a badge for this course?

Getting your badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each session of the course
- participate in a minimum of three of the course forum activities
- score 50% or more in the two 'badged' quizzes in Session 3 and Session 6.

For each 'badged' quiz, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false questions you will get only one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

If you're not successful in getting 50% the first time you can re-attempt the quiz after 24 hours, and you can come back to it as many times as you like.

The course is designed to take six sessions of study (which you might cover over six weeks) but can be completed anytime other than the month of May each year, when the course is closed for maintenance. **This means the course and its forums will be open any time other than the month of May each year to allow you to complete any forum postings you want to submit. Three postings are needed to meet the requirements of the badge**. **For your post to be counted towards your badge, please ensure it is a reply to the 'parent' post and not a reply to a participant's post.** However, please do also feel free to comment on one another's posts in the spirit of collaboration and participation in the discussion.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge. Getting a badge is an opportunity for you to reflect on what you have learned, rather than seeing it as a test or hurdle to be jumped. Digital badges are increasingly recognised by employers.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the OpenLearn FAQs. When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in My OpenLearn within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

Moving around the course

If at any time you want to return to the start of the course, click on 'Course content'. From here you can navigate to any part of the course. Alternatively, use the session links at the top of every page of the course.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button in your browser. You can do this by holding down the 'CTRL' key (or CMD on a Mac) and left clicking the mouse button; or right click and 'open in new tab'.

This course has been designed to offer different ways for you to participate and engage with the ideas and information. These include written texts, audio and audio-visual stimuli. In this badged course you will need to post in some discussion forums in order to gain the badge in order to maximise your learning from this course.

You will also be regularly prompted to 'Think about' certain questions and ideas. We would encourage you to note down your ideas in a way that is convenient for you, as you may find it helpful to refer to these when completing subsequent activities.

On completion of the course you can access all your responses to activities in one place on the Review your answers page

Full details of the different types of activities you will participate in can be found in the Activities and tools page of the 'Help with using this course' document.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional start-of-course survey. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

Session 1: Why study this course?

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 Topics worthy of research might be routine or due to extraordinary circumstances

Social scientists and scientists can cast light on many aspects of human behaviour, to look again at the ordinary and the extraordinary. You may be about to become such a researcher, have had some experience already or be interested in evaluating such research as a reader.

Carrying out research with people, whatever their age or position and wherever you are in the world, means you have a duty to act responsibly and ethically. You have obligations to the people you will be observing, interviewing, collecting data from or reporting on, just as the researchers whose work you read do.

By acting ethically, researchers are treating people with respect and care.

By acting ethically, researchers make well-reasoned decisions about their study's design and data, weighing up risks and benefits.

You may be interested in this course because you are thinking of designing a research project relevant to your work or voluntary work setting, or you may want to follow up an issue that is important to you and your values. Perhaps you are curious about a news item or some research you came across from your previous studies?

Understanding ethical decision-making as an essential part of research will help you develop important critical thinking skills.

This is not a course about the theory of ethics or moral philosophy, although Aristotle will feature later! The specific focus is developing ethical reasoning, which leads to ethics in action.

Welcome to Session 1 of *Becoming an ethical researcher*. You will start by considering the questions:

- what is ethical research?
- why does context matter?
- what is research for?
- what is data?

The examples you will explore all relate to key ethical issues within social science (or related) research. While the examples included are biased towards childhood and youth and educational settings, the issues raised are much more widely applicable to any research involving humans.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- explain why ethics is important in social science research

- recognise some ethical complexities in deciding whether and how research should be conducted
- appreciate the ethical impact of a researcher's position in the research
- compare the ethical issues surrounding collecting different types of data.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional start-of-course survey. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

Activities

Session 1 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Watch a video clip and respond to reflection prompts	10 minutes
2	Read a case study about a youth group context and respond to reflection prompts	20 minutes
3	Watch a video clip and respond to reflection prompts	15 minutes
4	Read a case study about an inclusive practice teacher in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, complete a diagram and upload an image	20 minutes
5	Introduce yourself on the forum (Part A), consider an issue worthy of research (Part B) and post your ideas on the forum (Part C)	30 minutes
6	Listen to two audio clips with researchers, make notes in grid (Part A) and reflect on possible issues (Part B)	35 minutes
7	Read a case study about covert research and complete a drag and drop activity	15 minutes
8	Complete the quiz on fake news and respond to reflection prompts	15 minutes
9	Complete the table on data	5 minutes
	Session 1 quiz	As required
10	Post an image to summarise your learning in Session 1	15 minutes

1 Becoming an ethical researcher

Figure 2 Research should shed light and offer insights in ways that are respectful

How do you become an ethical researcher? Are there guidelines? Is it obvious, or are there more nuanced issues to take into account?

This course will help you think through why ethics always matter, whatever level of research you are considering.

Most professional researchers seek ethical clearance formally from a university ethics board. If you are researching independently, you still have a duty to plan ahead, comply with safety guidelines, discuss any problems with stakeholders in the research context and, ideally, a supervisor or interested peer. You also need to be alert to changing contexts and their implications for your research.

Activity 1 What constitutes ethical decision-making?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch the following 1 minute 52 second video clip and consider the prompts below.

Channel 4: The Secret Life of Kids: 5 Year Olds (open the video in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl [or Cmd on a Mac] when you click on the link).

Think about:

- What is motivating the children?
- What is influencing the children?
- How are the children going about the process of decision-making?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Just like the children shown in the experiment in the video clip, deciding what to do is not just about following someone else's rules, but about developing a strong ethical sense, so that you can judge ethics in context.

1.1 Ethical decision-making

The first step in ethical decision-making is awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues and complexities. Each research context is unique, but you can still learn to anticipate key ethical issues.

If you are a new researcher, you may be wondering how to be sure what exactly an ethical choice might be. You may be wondering where to find a code of practice or set of ethical guidelines, and whether these apply in every context. What happens when there are difficult situations or when values clash?

Looking at the stories behind the research of others is one way to develop ethical awareness. In this course, you will hear from diverse researchers who have carried out studies with people across different research settings, discussing why their research matters and what issues and choices arose along the way. You will consider both real and hypothetical situations a researcher might face and have chances to apply ethical reasoning.

Looking at guidelines and ethical frameworks is another way to learn about issues that might arise. In this course, you will learn how professional associations such as the British Psychological Society, the British Educational Research Association and the Association of Internet Researchers produce ethical guidelines for researchers to uphold, and why they regularly review guidelines to adapt to changes in society.

Now read Case study 1.1, which you will discuss at a later stage.

Case study 1.1 Community youth group: proposal to research extremism

Imagine you are part of a youth group in a close-knit local community. You have grown up in the area, have wide networks and have become a respected peer leader and youth leader, encouraging others to speak up and be part of the community. You are doing an undergraduate degree part-time and are passionate about making a difference to others and giving marginalised young people a voice.

You pick up from casual conversations and online posts that some members of the youth group, who are your friends and neighbours, are becoming increasingly influenced by extremist views directed against new community members. A hate crime has occurred in a neighbourhood street and has been reported in the press. Community tensions are running high after many years of harmony. You are concerned that younger youth club members might be drawn into extremist views.

You want to gather information and understand why and how the ideas are spreading. You want to make use of your analytical skills to do some research in your own setting. You are aware this is sensitive and believe it could be valuable.

In Activity 2, you will think about balancing the risks and benefits when planning research.

Activity 2 Should you or shouldn’t you… research extremism?

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Reflect on Case study 1.1 by responding to the following prompts:

Think about:

- Is this research important?
- What is unique about this context? What else would you like to know about this context?
- What is unique about this researcher's position?
- What is the power relationship of the peer youth leader? How easy will it be for the young people to refuse consent to take part in any research?
- What are the risks and benefits of conducting research in this context?
- Would you advise the youth leader to plan research or not to research at all? Why or why not?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have wanted to know more about how the group is viewed beyond its immediate community and reflect on its history and membership, which might involve consulting more widely to understand how it is perceived and additional issues you would need to bear in mind beyond those with which you were already familiar. You also might want to speak to other researchers who have examined this topic to take their advice, based on their experiences, of how to anticipate and minimise risks in order to achieve the benefits you hope for.

Becoming an ethical researcher means being prepared to weigh up risk, revise plans and apply ethical decision-making to all stages of the research process.

In this session, you will have a chance to focus on how the context and topic of research relates to ethical complexities, and to ask why it is justifiable to carry out social science research. You will start to map out the terrain of ethical thinking and consider the questions you need to ask in order to confront the challenges of ethical research.

Becoming an ethical researcher involves a long-term commitment and a heightened sense of awareness.

This course is based on the key principles of ethical education according to Rest (1982), where developing sensitivity, reasoning, motivation and implementation are separate stages in becoming an ethical researcher.

This goes beyond a set of rules or a checklist created by someone else. It is about taking both a personal and a professional responsibility to act ethically and to review ethics in relation to your own and others' research. It starts with deciding what you want to research.

2 What to research: sensitive topics

Figure 3 Are there topics that should remain in the shadows?

Some potential research topics may seem far too sensitive to even approach. If asking a question has the potential to cause upset or distress, is it ever appropriate to ask it? A research topic might be sensitive because it evokes strong emotions about poignant or controversial topics. Or the context might be challenging for the participants and the researcher, whether you are an outsider (such as a university academic studying in a

school or a commercial organisation) or an insider (such as the researcher in Case study 1.1) to that context.

What should or shouldn't you research? You will have a chance to debate this later in the course forum.

Established researchers based in universities or on funded projects are required to seek ethical clearance from an ethics committee before undertaking any form of data collection. They have to justify their choice of topic and be transparent about risks and sensitivities.

All researchers, even those planning a small-scale study, need to think ahead, assess risk, be transparent and discuss their plans with someone experienced. Going into a context unprepared and without due consideration of the potential risks for participants and the researcher is highly unethical. You will explore this further in Session 2.

Activity 3 Should you or shouldn't you… study sensitive topics with children and young people?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Watch this 27-second video clip of a researcher from the Children's Research Centre at The Open University and respond to the following prompt questions.

Video content is not available in this format.

Children's Research Centre

Think about:

- Why might children be considered potentially vulnerable in research?
- How did the research discussed show sensitivity to the children involved?
- Can you think of other ways researchers might reduce the vulnerability of children participating in research, ideally empowering them?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you have been a participant in a research study, this should have been on a voluntary basis and you should have been offered the opportunity to withdraw. Think about this in relation to children and their ability to voluntarily participate. Children and young people are often in situations with adults in which there are unequal power relations and therefore it calls into question the extent to which they feel able to refuse invitations to be involved. Such power imbalances can happen in many settings, such as when more senior members of staff invite less senior staff they line manage or when patients, clients or customers are asked by more powerful stakeholders to participate in research. Children and young people, and those who have been made vulnerable by their position in society or personal characteristics, have things to say about their lives and experiences, and a right to be asked and heard. This can be enabled by creating safe spaces for them to speak, offering them ways to express their views, such as through media such as art, and by inviting them to participate in research in ways which make sense to them.

2.1 Sensitive topics and contexts

Figure 4 A child's response to being asked to build a room using clay. They created a

room with three walls, a floor and two figures seated on chairs (the child – female – and their younger brother) in front of two windows, a fire and behind a coffee table, with a cat in the foreground (which the parents explained had recently died) (Souter-Anderson, 2019)

The ethics of choosing a research topic in a particular context involves thinking through the potential risks and benefits. If no-one asks about the experience of cancer or COVID-19 or dementia, we won't know about people's experiences. If no-one asks about the psychosocial impact on young people and children of living through war or bullying or genital mutilation, then those suffering will remain invisible. One key benefit of rigorous research is dissemination; sharing knowledge and potentially making a difference to policy, practice and experience in society.

Although it is complex to research sensitive topics or work alongside vulnerable groups, it is possible to do so in an ethical way.

Now read Case study 1.2. You will discuss this in the forum in Activity 5.

Case study 1.2 Inclusive practice in sub-Saharan Africa: research on children orphaned by HIV

Imagine you are an international volunteer. You are going to use your experience as a teacher who specialises in inclusive practice to develop training on inclusive practice in an unnamed country in sub-Saharan Africa with a high HIV death rate and a large number of orphaned children.

You find data on HIV infection rates, orphaned children, school drop outs and estimates of the number of child carers. You find literature on child trauma and attachment theory. Colleagues at a teacher training college have anecdotes about young orphaned children as family carers in the communities they know.

You note a gap in the literature about this particular country's context so you decide to design some research to find out more about the lived experience of orphaned children and the impact on schooling there, which you want to feed into the training.

You are a first-time visitor in the country and do not speak any of the local languages or understand social cues about politeness.

Activity 4 Weighing up risks and benefits in a research proposal

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Reflect on Case study 1.2 and complete this mapping exercise to help you decide whether you should or shouldn't research the topic.

1. On a piece of paper, draw a circle in the middle and split the page into two halves.
2. Title one side of the paper 'risks' and list the risks you can imagine.
3. Title the other side 'benefits', listing all the benefits you can imagine.
4. Decide whether you think the benefits outweigh the risks (or vice versa).
5. In the central circle, draw a see-saw which indicates your judgment as to whether the research proposal is justifiable or not. Point the end of the see-saw to whichever side represents your decision.

You can then take a photograph of your diagram (see Taking screenshots for help with this) and upload the image to the course forum thread, which will mean you can see other learners' ideas and opinions.

Note: In this forum post you may want to use an image, for advice on how to upload images to forum review our advice page.

It may not be appropriate, practical or ethical for you to conduct sensitive research yourself, but you can still build on other research in a worthwhile way. For example, it may not be appropriate for you to interview teenage mothers, but you can review previously published studies to draw conclusions about what is already known, evaluate the evidence available and propose new areas worthy of research.

If your studies take you to masters level, you will need to generate a dissertation topic that is practical, small-scale and, above all, ethical. This might involve carrying out desk, rather than field, based research. You will also be looking closely at published literature in your area of interest and identifying ideas for new research proposals. As a postgraduate student, you will be encouraged to analyse how ethics, research design and methodology are summarised by other researchers in presentations and reports.

Whatever discipline you are interested in, and whether your research plans with people might involve sensitive topics or not, you must be aware of how to act ethically and how your presence as a researcher impacts on others. That is why you need to be aware of who you are as a researcher, and your position in relation to other people.

3 Who are you as a researcher: insider or outsider?

Figure 5 It's important to be aware of your presence, position and power

Who are you as a researcher? You are researching people in contexts and, whether you are new or known in a research setting, you will have a different impact on those in the setting as you engage in your study. The research may change or be impacted upon because of your identity. This is an aspect of a researcher's *positionality*.

A key point, therefore, is to be aware of your presence, position and power as you seek permission to carry out research. Positionality relates to how your values, identity, status, experiences or political beliefs might influence the design or data analysis. It is important to be transparent about if and how your position shaped your choice of topic or interpretation of data, and to declare any conflicts of interest.

3.1 The implications of being an insider researcher

If you position yourself as an *insider researcher*, you have the advantage of a working relationship, knowledge of the context and some established degree of trust.

Even if it is quicker to receive formal approval to proceed with your research and to gain access, you will still need to ask and not assume approval is a 'given'. You still need to be aware of not intruding on people's time. You need to be clear about the benefits and risks.

Now consider the potential disadvantages of being an insider. Could you be too close to the context? Can you remain rigorous with your research design and critically engage with your data collection?

What about keeping data confidential? Will this be particularly challenging for you due to your existing relationships with others in the setting and the obligations of your existing role? Will you be under pressure to only report good news that emerges from the research because of prior expectations placed on you and power imbalances?

Think again about the imagined context of the youth group in Case study 1.1. The youth worker is an insider. This means they are already picking up information suggesting there is a problem from everyday conversations. But the youth worker can't use conversations as data without consent, unless they were to take the unusual and risky step of doing covert research. Covert research means not asking for consent, which raises ethical issues. In place of collecting evidence by observation, given the challenges in doing so, could useful information about this issue be collected in alternative ways? For example, questionnaires could allow individuals to respond whilst remaining unidentifiable, or interviews could be offered for those who are willing to speak in a safe space the researcher creates.

3.2 The implications of being an outsider researcher

If you position yourself as an *outsider researcher*, you have the advantage of bringing a fresh perspective to your data collection. Participants may appreciate being asked about their experiences and may be reassured by the confidentiality you can offer. A disadvantage may be the time taken to gain permission to undertake the research, unfamiliarity with the sociocultural context and, crucially, the time taken to build up trust.

Think again about Case study 1.2, where the researcher interested in researching orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa was an 'outsider' from the Global North. This situation reflects inequalities of economic power. As the researcher was not familiar with the local languages or cultural norms, some ethical sensitivities may have been missed. The researcher may have decided to work with local partners and to amend the research to align with what was practical and ethical.

You will learn more about the ethics of working with partners on international research later in this course.

Later in the session and in the course you will hear further reflections on positionality and context in research from current researchers.

Activity 5 What do you think? Share your research ideas on the forum

Allow approximately 30 minutes

Part A

- Introduce yourself on the Activity 5 Part A thread in the course forum to join the community of learners interested in this topic.
- Using Case study 1.1 or 1.2, state your view on whether the research is important and should or shouldn't take place.

Part B

Imagine Bill Gates needs your help to set up a research project on an important global issue relevant for all humanity. There is a big budget.

In preparation for making a further course forum post, identify a context with which you are familiar in which you could carry out globally important research. Identity one or two topics you think would be important to research linked to this context. Clarify for yourself what your positionality would be to that context if you were to lead this research.

Part C

- In the Activity 5 Part C thread in the course forum, post a summary of one of the topics you would want to research, where it might take place and why you think it is important. You can also explain your positionality to the research if you were to take the lead on researching this topic. The post should be no longer than 100 words. Be careful not to identify the context, any individuals or organisations.
- Read the posts of other learners on the course about their ideas for globally important research. It would be great to respond to one or two posts, but

remember that it will only be your original post (which needs to be in response to the parent post) which will count towards your digital badge.

4 Making a difference: why is research important?

Figure 6 Making a difference in the world: Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Greta Thunberg, Nobel Peace Prize nominee

Many people aim for their research to make an impact and some degree of difference to the world, whether imagining they can offer a big or small benefit. Some research arises from a desire to explore another angle on a social justice issue or a desire to find a new way of doing something. Research often needs courage as well as curiosity.

Now you will turn to some researchers discussing their work.

Activity 6 Researchers introduce their research studies with youth workers and teachers

Allow approximately 25 minutes for Part A and 10 minutes for Part B

Part A

As you listen to two contemporary researchers from The Open University, think about the prompts below and then complete the following grid.

Think about:

- what are they researching?
- why have they chosen to research their topic?
- what is the context for their research?
- what is their position towards the research – insider or outsider (or both)?
- why do they consider their research to be important and beneficial?

Audio content is not available in this format.

Action research: Kate Breeze

Audio content is not available in this format.

Action research: Teresa Cremin

While you listen to the interviews, make notes in the relevant column in the grid below, leaving the last row blank until you have listened to both audios and moved on to Part B.

	Kate's doctoral research with youth workers	**Teresa's research about teachers as writers**
Positionality?	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
What?	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Why?	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
For whom?	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
A key issue you can imagine	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Part B

After you have listened to both interviews, imagine a key ethical issue for each, which might arise for the researchers due to their positionality in relation to their chosen research context of the selected topic. Complete the last row of the table. Then reveal the table in the discussion below to see some suggested issues you might have identified.

Discussion

	Kate's doctoral research with youth workers	Teresa's research about teachers as writers
Positionality?	Insider as a former youth worker but outsider as commissioned to work with centres hadn't previously worked with	Outsider as a university academic – but she had originally been an English teacher
What?	To critically examine youth workers' experiences of supporting children and families in outdoor education centres	To examine whether by supporting teachers with their writing it impacts on their practice
Why?	Under-researched and a new opportunity to learn how to use outdoor centres effectively with different groups	Teachers of English are not prepared well as English graduates in terms of their writing and that this is likely to lead to a lack of confidence and expertise in their teaching of writing in English
For whom?	Policy-makers; leaders of the centres, to improve their practice; youth workers, to help them be critical about how to use the centres as part of their work	Ultimately for the students of the teachers being worked with during the project; the Critical Writing foundation, to learn from the feedback generated on how to develop their courses
A key issue you can imagine	• The children and young families are likely to be experiencing challenging circumstances, which need to be handled sensitively and safely. • As an outsider working with practitioners and families, there will be tensions between confidentiality and safeguarding practices. • Not knowing the families might lead to uncomfortable interactions.	• It is not straightforward to make a direct cause and effect connection between teaching teachers and their students' performance. • Teachers will respond differently to the training programme but will it be clear which responses are more effective? • How will better teacher performance be measured?

You will learn more about the way these questions led the researchers to make ethical decisions about research design, data collection, analysis and reporting if you decide to register for one of The Open University's Masters qualifications in Education or Childhood and Youth.

4.1 Is covert research ever ethical?

Now you will return to the issue of challenging contexts and sensitive topics. In Case study 1.1 – the imaginary youth club – you might have considered whether it was ethical to report casual chats without consent, to do nothing or even to go 'undercover' as a form of covert research strategy. Going undercover would mean that you do not disclose your presence. Some online facilitators may think this is better than disrupting the group.

Covert research is generally not encouraged as it does not allow informed and voluntary participation. However, it has been justified in some cases of online research where, despite trying, a researcher has not found it possible to invite informed consent or, occasionally, in other research situations, as in the following example:

Case study 1.3 Covert research

Julia Ebner is a researcher, counter terrorism expert and author of *Going Dark: The Secret Social Life of Extremists* (2020). Her work involves conducting covert undercover research online using fake identities as a way to understand extremist hate groups including far right neo-Nazi groups, Isis and trad wives – a return to traditional gender roles – and how they get around laws and radicalise people online through posts and gaming.

For what she considered to be ethical reasons, Ebner used her own time for the covert research where she infiltrated these groups, taking on the views of a newcomer who appeared to be naïve. She took care to avoid repeating or spreading the messages and, when she felt hate crimes had been committed, reported these to the security services (Thomson and Ebner, 2020).

Ebner reflects on the fear, hate and dehumanising impact of the ideologies of these groups:

> There are times when I feel pessimistic about how these extremist movements have the potential, in the medium and long term, to completely destabilise our democracies, not just through intimidating opponents but manipulating normal, average users and radicalising sympathisers.
>
> (Ebner, 2020).

But, she adds, researching the book also made her see a human side to people with extreme viewpoints. However disgusting she found their ideologies, she says she felt

> empathy, even sympathy, for people's fears. Because in the end there was always some kind of fear, or lack of love or recognition, that was driving individuals into those networks.
>
> (Ebner, cited in Sturges, 2020).

She also analyses the threat to young people and might have been tempted to come to the aid of the young people. On coming across young people in neo-Nazi channels (the youngest she encountered claimed to be 14), Ebner had to resist the urge to engage with them individually and attempt to change their minds:

> I had to keep telling myself that I will have a bigger impact by gathering information.
>
> (Ebner, cited in Sturges, 2020).

In the next activity, you will listen to Julia talking about her research. We have chosen this example to help you think about the ethical considerations of bringing issues into the public domain through ethical research.

Activity 7 Justifications and adaptations by researchers

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Watch the 32-second video clip of Julia Ebner discussing her research for the BBC (open the video in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl [or Cmd on a Mac] when you click on the link).

Having read Case study 1.3, reflect on Julia's justification for her research approach and match up the issues and decisions below.

- Wanting to understand why extremists hold the views they do
- To reveal the extent and nature of extremist views which would otherwise be hidden from wider society
- Wanting to hear/observe the views of those in what might be considered a closed community of those holding antisocial views
- Concern about observing young people being influenced and sharing extremist views
- Not wanting her research activity to further spread the views of the hate groups

Match each of the items above to an item below.

- To embark on a study whose insights might help those in a position to counter extremism which offers an insider perspective
- To tackle the study as a piece of covert online research
- Taking a false identity to avoid being identified as a researcher
- Resisting the temptation to challenge the views of the group in interactions with them which might have revealed her identity
- Behaving as a naïve social media user who does not repeat or spread messages

Covert research like Julie Ebner's is not usually supported by those who review research and may not be accepted for publication. This would be because of the lack of opportunities for forum participants to offer their consent to participate, and because entering this particular context might place her as a researcher at risk should she become identified. Julie might be subjected to a backlash from those on the website and any such revelation would also have put the reputation of the sponsor of the research in the

spotlight, which they would be keen to avoid. However, as accepted in the following advice provided by the British Educational Research Association (2024), covert research can be defensible, with agreed institutional support.

> It is important for researchers to take account of the rights and interests of those indirectly affected by their research, and to consider whether action is appropriate – for example, they should consider whether it is appropriate to provide information or obtain informed consent. In rare cases – such as some politically volatile settings, or where researchers are investigating illegal activity – covert research can be defensible.
>
> (BERA, 2024, p. 11).

An alternative approach would have been to conduct a systematic review of published literature. Such a review could have included historical documentation relating to extremism, and might have offered the kind of insights Ebner was interested in pursuing around motivations and ideologies about extremism. It would still be relevant to consider ethical issues such as access to documentation, confidentiality and how to show respect to all concerned, so the challenges would be different, but could still provide an opportunity to put the spotlight on the issues of extremism.

5 How do we know if something is true?

Figure 7 5G was inaccurately blamed for the COVID-19 pandemic: inaccurate data can have life-changing consequences

Inaccurate data, including conspiracy theories, can be serious. Data which is inaccurate in some way may have life-changing medical, legal, social or educational consequences.

Ethical researchers are very thorough and respectful of data. It is an ethical issue to ensure readers have confidence in your research design, can access the data and are confident in the way in which you have collected, analysed and reported it.

Even though we know not to believe everything we read in the news media, it is not always clear how we can recognise information that is being shared but which may have been manipulated for unethical reasons.

Activity 8 Is it true?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

First try the BBC quiz (open the link in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl [or Cmd on a Mac] when you click on the link) and see if you can spot the fake news. There are seven questions. You do not need to complete all seven but, in each case, read the comment about the source of the fake news.

Then think about the following prompts.

Think about:

- how could these sources have been checked?
- how did they appear to have spread as if real news?
- whether you have confidence in the BBC as source of the judgments made on each news item?

Having the confidence to go back to data sources to check for validity and rigour frees us to be critical consumers of research. Having some tools to question whether or not data has been collected, stored and presented in an ethical way is an important part of citizenship as well as a higher-level skill you will constantly use as a student.

5.1 Data as a source of evidence

To be in a position to evaluate data assumes a researcher has thought about what counts as possible data sources. Research involving humans often involves thinking widely about sources of evidence about their attitudes, opinions, values, feelings and behaviours as relevant to their research topics (questions or hypotheses).

Activity 9 Is it data?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Which of the following might count as valid data that could be ethically collected in a research project? Add a ‘X’ to the relevant boxes and then click the ‘Reveal discussion’ tab.

1	A handwritten love letter	*Provide your answer...*
2	A screenshot of a WhatsApp conversation	*Provide your answer...*
3	An interview transcript	*Provide your answer...*
4	Examination scores for a class of children	*Provide your answer...*
5	A clay model made by a vulnerable young person in a therapeutic session	*Provide your answer...*
6	Numerical responses to a survey	*Provide your answer...*
7	An anonymised child’s drawing	*Provide your answer...*
8	A youth worker’s audio reflection of their day at work	*Provide your answer...*
9	Performance management data on an employee	*Provide your answer...*
10	Frequency records of how many times an activity was carried out per day	*Provide your answer...*

Discussion

Now look again at the list and think about your assumptions. This activity was designed to challenge you. All of these possibilities could count as data depending on the context and research topic.

If you selected 3, 4, 6 and 10 then perhaps your view of data prioritises quantitative (numerical) data as more valid than qualitative (text, audio, visual) data.

If you selected types such as 3, 6, 7, 10, you might have been thinking about which were more straightforward, less personal, for a researcher to access. Data sources

3, 6, 7 and 10 are likely to be primary, rather than secondary, data sources, which are likely to have been generated for the purposes of the research rather than already existing.

For example, a love letter could be an important turning point in autobiographical, narrative or historical research. An artefact such as a clay model or a child's drawing might come from a visual or participatory methodology to convey what can be expressed more appropriately than in words or numbers.

What we don't know from the above list is whether the data has been collected and stored according to ethical (and legal) principles. If the WhatsApp conversation screenshot was shared without consent or if identifying features were included, then it might lead to embarrassment or even harmful repercussions when shared in a different arena. If the performance management data was collected, this would need consent from both the leader holding the data and the employee to whom it relates and would need to be kept securely and confidentially.

6 This session’s quiz

Now you’ve reached the end of Session 1, you can try a short quiz to help you reflect on what you’ve learned.

Session 1 practice quiz

Open the quiz in a new tab or window and come back here when you are done.

7 Summary of Session 1

What constitutes ethical research?

This session has introduced you to some of the ethical choices social science researchers may face when engaging in research depending on the topics, contexts and data they are interested in studying. You will have reflected on a range of research examples in different contexts and some of the ethical concerns and issues which might arise. You have had a chance to think about why research is important and as a researcher, the need to weigh up risks and benefits when considering whether or not to research a topic or how you might carry it out. You have also considered the need to be aware of the positionality of the researcher and how it might influence research. You have also started to think about topics you think are important and, if you had the chance, might like to research.

Activity 10 Gallery task of takeaways from Session 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Choose one image to sum up a memorable point in your learning during this session about ethical research and share it on the course forum thread.

Your chosen image might capture something that you think researchers should or should not do. Be careful to collect images that can be shared using Creative Copyright licenses and are ethical to share. If you need to attribute the owner of the image, do so under your image post. You could do a drawing or take a photograph of your own. You would then be the image owner. If the photo includes other people, you should gain their consent and it is recommended to avoid this if they can be identified (e.g. their face is showing).

Note: In this forum post you may want to use an image, for advice on how to upload images to forum review our advice page.

You can now go to Session 2.

Session 2: Planning ethical research

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 Planning involves consulting others

Welcome to Session 2 of *Becoming an ethical researcher.*

Identifying ethical issues and reasoning about how best to manage them helps researchers to be confident that their research is carried out with respect for all involved, with minimum harm and with maximum benefit. Poor planning and preparation are indefensible for a researcher. Respect is due as thanks for what can be considered the 'gifts' of data you are asking of others. Respectful relationships with participants ensure participants are empowered to freely share their views providing authentic data to create good research. Poor planning can lead to a researcher not fulfilling all of their responsibilities through naivety or ignorance. Without robust research, outcomes will be invalidated. It is important to note that decisions about research design have ethical consequences and design and ethics should be considered together to show what is termed *research integrity*.

Comprehensive preparation for ethical research is essential. Ethical considerations are considered such a vital part of the research process that higher educational institutions invest considerable time and effort in reviewing all research plans prior to research being undertaken by their staff. As you read in Session 1, they set up research ethics committees (RECs), also known as institutional review boards (IRBs), to review all proposals for research involving human participants which is to be undertaken under their auspices. Whatever form of research researchers carry out – for example, whether desk-based or field-based – ethics committees advise and support professional researchers in proceeding with confidence.

This session will help you to become aware of issues researchers should be considering as part of their planning and preparation, regardless of whether they are conducting research on behalf of institutions or as independent researchers. Whether planning to carry out research or reviewing reported studies, it is important to hold the work of researchers to account. This session builds on thinking from Session 1 about what researchers should be taking into consideration and focuses more on practical researcher decision-making, including how to apply specific ethics guidelines and principles.

In this session, you will focus on preparing to start research. You will study ways of thinking about the possible positive and negative consequences of any proposed research, and strategies for ensuring the research is worthwhile and conducted in an ethically responsible way.

The key message is that researchers should consult and fully inform all stakeholders, particularly research participants. They should listen and take on board the interests and concerns of stakeholders and be flexible in adapting their research plans. If, in consultation with stakeholders, changes are made to research plans, researchers will need to justify such changes and ensure changes are acceptable to all concerned.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- identify those who might be involved in and affected by a research study
- identify considerations for deciding when and whether research should be undertaken
- evaluate alternative options for research scenarios
- explain what permission, consent, assent and informed ongoing consent/assent mean in research.

Activities

Session 2 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Watch a video of a classroom in India; respond to reflection prompts	15 minutes
2	Draw a diagram; list those affected by and involved with research	15 minutes
3	Part A – Reflect on either Case study 2.1 or 2.2; respond to reflection questions Part B – Post on the course forum about either Case study 2.1 or 2.2	20 minutes 25 minutes
4	Rank four possible approaches to research in response to four scenarios	15 minutes
5	Compare and contrast two approaches to research	15 minutes
6	Part A – Reflect on definitions in relation to Case study 2.1 Part B – Watch a video about informed consent; note the advice	10 minutes 15 minutes
7	Part A – Respond to reflection prompts on selected case study/scenario Part B – Read a blog post; reflect on possible researcher actions	15 minutes 20 minutes
	Session 2 quiz	As required
8	Create a mind map; take a screenshot	15 minutes

1 Who should researchers consider in research?

Figure 2 Topics worthy of research might be routine or due to extraordinary circumstances

Before planning to undertake research using any data collection method, an ethical researcher needs to identify the person or people from whom permissions should be sought. For example, observation is a tool commonly used in research, one of many a researcher might use to address their research questions. It allows researchers to gather evidence about human behaviours, actions and use of spaces. Observations can provide a researcher with a window into a setting that can give insights into what has taken place, which can then be compared with other situations, in other settings, at different times. However, when using observation, the researcher needs to think about the impact their presence may have on those being observed and reflect on how they might feel about being asked to be observed.

There are also others who should also be considered. For example, it might be appropriate to consult the hosts for the setting in which the observation is to take place, and the parents or carers of any children, young people or others in the setting who are responsible for their wellbeing, whether underage or not considered capable of giving legal consent to being part of a research study. Researchers must also consider those who have responsibility for the safety of those people they wish to observe and others to whom the researcher may have obligations, such as funders or university sponsors. The perspectives, expectations, assumptions and perceptions of all stakeholders should be considered before research plans are finalised.

This starts by considering whether the research should be undertaken at all, as well as how it will be carried out. Sometimes, no matter how much a researcher would like to research a question that is important to them, ethical considerations for those involved could mean that the research should not be undertaken. In the first activity, you will have a chance to consider two case studies and reflect on this decision-making process.

1.1 Throwing a spotlight on research in action

Case study 2.1 A glimpse into a classroom in India

A research and development project led by The Open University was carried out in India, where academics from the UK worked to support teachers to better

understand their classrooms through carrying out video observations. Different subject specialist teacher educators from the UK worked with subject specialist teacher educators in India as part of the TESS-India (2020) project (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page). The recorded observations of teaching and learning were chosen so that they could be used for teacher training by local teacher educators.

In Activity 1, you will watch one of the video clips in which children aged 14–15 years were being taught English as a second language in a school in Delhi, India. It features some students reading aloud and other students in pairs writing out, in English, passages from a book, and then correcting themselves.

Before video recording, and in order to allow observation of such an activity, there are questions a researcher should ask about how to reduce the potential intrusiveness of capturing what is happening:

- Should the observation be captured by video recording?
- Would video recording be considered overly intrusive?
- Would it be more appropriate to do an audio recording of the activity? While audio recordings can still lead to the identification of participants and would not be better at protecting identities than video recording, it could be less intrusive. Simultaneously, it can be difficult technically to audio record different participants (and groups of participants) in a busy setting.
- Could researchers simply observe and make field notes?
- Is there a combination of audio and video recording and use of field notes which might capture the important data from the observation while minimising disruption to those being observed?

Collecting good quality data is in itself an ethical issue: participant voices must be heard if the study is to do justice to those in the setting. In the activity, you will watch the video and have a chance to think about researcher choice.

Activity 1 Observation and researcher choice

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Watch the four-minute long film of an Indian classroom referred to in Case study 2.1.

Video content is not available in this format.

Classroom in India

Then reflect on the following.

Think about:

- What are the possible research benefits of observing classrooms like this?
- What are the possible concerns gatekeepers and others in the setting might have when researchers contact them to request permission to record a classroom session?
- What are the possible aspirations those within the setting might have for taking part and what implications do these have for the researcher? [Our Voices 'Helping Others Research Journal' is a useful resource to help children prepare to take part in research including consideration of what they might want to get from the experience, which can be applicable to other aged people: Resources Archive - Our Voices]
- What are the possible negative consequences that could result from collecting data this way?
- What steps can researchers take to minimise negative consequences?
- What options do the researchers have to maximise the benefits?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

There can be benefits from recording behaviours in particular settings. Recorded activities are often used when training teachers, doctors, social workers and nurses to aid reflection, to see the bigger picture of what has taken place than even those in the space at the time could sense, and to help prepare those who have not yet experienced such situations. Such recordings can be used for research to collect data about patterns of behaviours and the use of space within and across situations.

This can lead to new revelations about what happens in these spaces, that wouldn't be possible just from those in the settings themselves.

However, by creating a record and sharing this with those who were not present, there are risks for those who have been shown in the recording. What they said and did can be seen by others they don't know and may be used in ways over which they have no control. Their actions and words might be misinterpreted or used against them if considered inappropriate; for example, by employers. Researchers, as well as journalists and those using such materials for teaching, need to take responsibility for what is recorded and should prepare those involved in and affected by the implications for making data collection public. Researchers should respect the wishes of those being recorded (or those responsible for those involved) and limit how public the data is made, if they express reservations about making the data more widely available.

The main risk is in identification of the individuals present and/or the space, therefore impacting the right to privacy. Researchers can consider whether anything can be done to reduce the revelation of specific information in the space, such as ensuring no organisational-specific logos or branding are visible. However, this in itself can be considered to be intrusive by affecting the natural setting and how it is being used. Alternatively, only the backs of people can be shown so that their features are not considered identifiable, which would mean careful consideration of where the camera is placed. Audio rather than video recording could be considered if this can be organised technically to pick up conversation sufficiently usefully for the purposes of the research. Taking still imagery is also an option, which allows selection of what to include or exclude visually.

De-identification can take place after a video recording is made by selection of which parts of the recording can be shared, or through digital manipulation, erasing features of people and places. It should be remembered that audio (whether as an element of a video recording or standalone recording) is also now digitally identifiable (and falls under the UK Data Protection Act 2018 as personal data). It too can be digitally manipulated if it is felt important to use this kind of data.

Agreement as to what people involved feel comfortable in sharing should always be gained.

Now think about another example of research in action to reveal additional considerations. Case study 2.2 refers to an individual researcher's reflections on research aimed at understanding the needs and experiences of those who have been displaced across national borders by local conditions.

Case study 2.2 Who should be involved in research with displaced people?

Victoria is a humanitarian consultant and researcher whose work focuses on migration, voice and community engagement. Her narrative focuses on fieldwork experiences examining communication-as-aid with refugees and humanitarian workers in refugee camps on the Thai–Burma [Myanmar] border. She offers the following reflections:

> The fieldwork formed part of a study that sought to understand the information and communication needs of refugees deciding whether or not to return to Burma [also known as Myanmar]. The majority of refugees in these camps

were of Karen ethnicity, with smaller numbers of other ethnic groups, including Burman, Kachin, Mon, Shan and Rakhine people, represented…

Prior to commencing the fieldwork, I prepared an ethics application for the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Advice I received from academic colleagues was ‘Give up. It will be impossible to get approval’ or ‘Treat the IRB process as a box-ticking exercise’. The first anticipated the risk-averseness of IRBs towards research with vulnerable populations. The second implied their decision need not prevent me from taking in-field decisions... After a stressful few months of back and forth, approval was granted.

In reflecting on the role the IRB had played in ‘approving’ my study, I appreciated how this manifest an imperialist epistemology. The IRB appointed itself as the arbiter of ethical practice with the refugee communities I was to study—irrespective of the degree of knowledge it possessed about the studied groups. In requiring that I seek ethics clearance before traveling to Thailand, the approval process did not demand nor support me in incorporating into my application the perspectives of members of the refugee communities themselves. It was not possible—due not least to the lack of internet access in the camps—to build relationships with refugees prior to arriving in Thailand.

Instead, I sought input from several aid agencies working on the Thai–Burma border. Whilst international aid workers typically live and work in locations far from the camps and have very little contact with the refugee communities, they are accessible from Australia via Skype and email…

If IRBs seek to promote research ‘for’ and ‘with’ refugee communities— and thereby do more than simply equipping institutions with a legal safeguard against liability—they must find a way to ensure that the voices of the displaced are heard in the research process. In the field, ethical challenges different to those anticipated in my ethics plan arose on a regular basis. For example, I became aware of the limitations of my approved approach to participant recruitment after learning about the frustrations held by refugees from non-Karen backgrounds as feeling excluded from refugee leadership and organisational structures. By recruiting people through committees, I accessed Karen perspectives but concealed the voices of those who viewed themselves as marginalised in the camps…

It is possible to address unanticipated ethics issues by applying for a variation to the approved ethics plan…This was again a protracted approval process, preventing me from nimbly adapting—in consultation with members of the refugee communities—to further ethical problems as they became apparent. Furthermore, the delays created a financial burden for me as a self-funded postgraduate researcher, forcing me to extend the duration of the fieldwork and face the prospect of financial penalties if I submitted my thesis beyond my agreed registration period. The threat of such consequences creates an incentive for researchers to comply with a pre-approved IRB ethics plan.

In Activity 2, you will imagine yourself as Victoria and think about all those who influenced and are affected by her research.

Activity 2 Micro, meso and macro layers of involvement in research

Allow approximately 15 minutes

In Case study 2.2, Victoria described the need to be involved with a range of other individuals and groups in trying to carry out her research with displaced people. This involved her acknowledging her responsibilities and building relationships.

On a piece of paper, draw three concentric circles with:

a. the inner circle for those likely to be involved in research with refugees 'in the field' – a microscale for the study
b. the second circle out from the centre for the gatekeepers needed to get 'access to the field' – a mesoscale for the study
c. the outer circle for those 'beyond the field sites' who are related to, affected by and affecting the study at its macroscale

Within each circle, note down individuals you think may have been relevant to Victoria in her research. Then click on 'Reveal discussion' to view an example of those you might have included.

Discussion

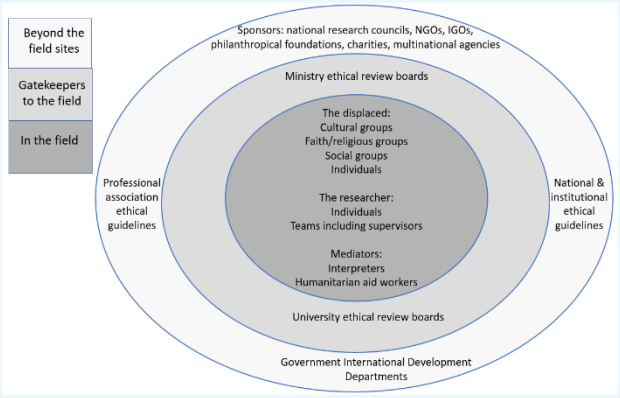


Figure 3 The ecological web of those involved in research with refugees

2 Showing respect

The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) gives a definition for respect as:

due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others.

And offers synonyms including:

due regard · consideration · thoughtfulness · attentiveness · politeness · courtesy · civility · deference

The respect Victoria was aiming to show to those made vulnerable by their displacement covered in Case study 2.2 can be defined as shown in the Cambridge Dictionary as paying attention to their feelings and rights through her thoughtfulness, attentiveness and by showing courtesy.

Victoria's reflections on her research demonstrate how she went about showing respect to those who had found themselves in settings without secure housing, food and safety, and living in groups that brought together different cultural, religious and language traditions.

Victoria was keen to find ways to represent people living in such situations to help them express their voice through her study and, especially, to limit their experience of research as being conducted 'on' them. However, you may think that in such a setting, where people are so vulnerable, research should not have been undertaken at all. Even in the Indian classroom you saw in Case study 2.1, the rights of researchers to arrive with film cameras could be questioned.

Figure 4 Decision-making needs to ensure that the positive consequences outweigh the negative

To decide whether to conduct research, a researcher (and those advising them) needs to balance the possible benefits of the proposed research against the possible risks of causing harm.

Activity 3 On what basis should researchers have access to settings?

Allow approximately 20 minutes for Part A and 25 minutes for Part B

Is it always ethical to go into environments where people interact to observe, talk to those in the setting or collect artefacts? Think back to Case study 2.1 (an Indian classroom) and Case study 2.2 (research in refugee camps) and then reflect on the following questions from the participants' perspectives and then your own perspective as a researcher wanting to carry out research.

Part A

What might a potential participant need to know?

First, use the following questions to prepare you for making a post on the course forum by thinking from the perspective of a potential participant.

Think about:

- What harm might a researcher cause by *observing* you and others in your setting? How would you feel if someone sat in a space where you were and took notes, completed a checklist or made an audio or film recording?
- What harm might a researcher cause by *interviewing* you and others in your setting? How would you feel if someone asked you questions, made notes about what you said or made an audio or film recording of you?
- What would you want to ask the researcher before giving consent?
- What would you want to know about the researcher?
- What do you think would be helpful for them to know (or that you would not want them to know) about you?
- What kind of information would motivate you to participate in their study?
- How could the researcher make you feel more comfortable to be observed/ interviewed?

Part B

What information would you offer in response to participants' questions to justify your request for help to carry out research?

Choose one of the case studies (2.1 or 2.2) and imagine you are one of the researchers. Post on the course forum a short justification for your research, which considers how you plan to maximise the benefits and minimise the harm to participants from your research.

Offer this in two parts about a) what you would need to know to ensure the study was beneficial (around 50 words) and b) what you would need to do to minimise potential harm from the study (around 50 words).

Post your explanation on the relevant forum thread for either Session 2 Activity 3 Case study 2.1 or Case study 2.2.

3 Researchers have options

Figure 5 There are always different directions to take

When ethical issues become apparent, a researcher has an opportunity to think about alternative courses of action. In deciding, there are well-investigated ethical research principles to guide their actions.

The following two activities provide a chance for you to evaluate some options for research scenarios.

Activity 4 What could you do as a researcher?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Consider the following research questions for potential research studies A–D:

A. What are the issues which affect sex workers in cities in country X?
B. What mental health issues do people released from long prison sentences experience?
C. How do women who have escaped from domestic violence situations cope in future relationship building?
D. How do children diagnosed with dyslexia respond to support from teaching assistants in secondary schools?

Rank the following approaches for appropriateness for each question. Give 1 to the method you think most and 4 to the approach you think least appropriate, or feel you should not consider using with participants linked to each study:

1. A survey by questionnaire of a) sex workers, b) released prisoners, c) domestic violence survivors, d) teaching assistants working with children diagnosed with dyslexia and their parents.
2. A literature review of published studies and reports about a) sex workers' lives, b) released prisoners, c) domestic violence survivors, d) children with dyslexia.
3. Interviews in the field with a) sex workers, b) health care professionals supporting released prisoners, c) social workers working with domestic violence survivors, d) children, their parents and teaching assistants.
4. Using secondary data collection such as a) medical and social services records of identified sex workers, b) medical records of released prisoners, c) social service records for domestic violence survivors, d) pupil performance data held within schools and in external tests.

Enter your responses in the table below.

Research question	1 Approach would most like to use	2 Approach might consider using	3 Approach you are less likely to consider using	4 Approach you would least want to use or fee you should not use
A	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
B	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
C	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
D	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Having considered the four possible scenarios in Activity 4, you probably thought you had insufficient information to make confident decisions. You might have thought 'Possibly, but it depends'. This would have been appropriate. Issues are considered differently depending on whether you are thinking from the perspective of a potential participant, a potential gatekeeper, as a funder or sponsor, and yet the researcher would feel obligated to all of these. This kind of information might have affected how you evaluated which approach the researcher should choose.

Activity 5 How did you evaluate the alternatives?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Review your responses to Activity 4 and compare the challenges associated with using literature reviews, interviews or questionnaires.

	Literature reviews	Interviews in the setting	Questionnaire survey

Benefits	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Challenges	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Think about:

- what you think you could conclude from the information generated
- what you think would not be possible to conclude from this information
- how the approach might cause a risk to those who are the focus of the study
- what challenges you might face as a researcher in gathering this information
- what you might need to do as a researcher to limit any risks from an ethical perspective.

A questionnaire survey allows participants to choose how much they feel they want to respond and in what ways, offering more privacy and, potentially, anonymity. However, there is so much that a researcher will not know about why participants answered in the way that they did and, unless linked with interviews, they will have little chance to find out. Participants might still worry about who will see their responses and how their data will be used, hoping that it will not be used to justify changes that could negatively affect themselves and others.

Interviews provide great opportunities to ask direct questions about what people think, what they feel and why they do what they do, to help understand a topic you feel is very important. However, this requires their time and their willingness to share personal information, including memories and values, which might unsettle, sadden or upset them. They might worry about how they will be represented, where their words might end up and who might read them. A researcher will need to think about the potential impact of questions on participants and how support might be offered. It is also good practice to invite participants to add their thoughts on the matter being researched before closing the interview. This recognises that the researcher may not know all the questions they should be asking and enables the participant to fulfil their own aspirations for taking part. It can also be revealing and useful for the research.

You might have thought about how literature reviews can bring together a wide range of evidence on a topic that would have been difficult to get access to study directly. However, literature reviews are unlikely to answer all of your questions, given that the reports are concise and partial accounts focused on each author’s particular research focus.

4 Time spent in planning is time well spent

Figure 6 Planning with others will provide a strong foundation

A researcher can try to anticipate some issues, especially if they spend time getting to know the setting and those in it as part of their research planning. This can be by:

- reading about what has already been published and is publicly available related to the context, thinking and talking to other researchers and professionals who have experience of the topic the researcher is interested in – at a macro (the broadest, national or international) scale
- consulting with leaders associated with the setting and who might give access – thinking at the meso (or middle-level, organisational) scale
- sharing the research aims, initial plans and design ideas with your potential research participants – thinking at the micro or 'in-field' level.

Such preparation and consultation can help a researcher to think about the agendas at play, how power is distributed, what the interests of those involved are in relation to the study, how the study might bring benefit and how it might be designed to minimise harm and disruption. It supports building supportive collaborative relationships of trust with all those involved and the principle of conducting research 'with' rather than 'on' people.

4.1 Concepts to support researchers and participants

There are some key concepts, which have entered into our language and in some cases into legal frameworks, that guide the way society behaves. The terms *permission*, *consent* and *assent* capture how we should behave towards one another to show our respect to act freely. As researchers, we need to embrace and enact these concepts as part of our research activities, with additional responsibilities (drawn originally from biomedical research) about gaining *informed* consent from potential participants to be confident they understand what is being asked of them before agreeing to participate.

There are some key concepts, which have entered into our language and in some cases into legal frameworks, that guide the way society behaves. The terms *permission*, *consent* and *assent* capture how we should behave towards everyone involved in research. By attending to these concepts we demonstrate our respect to those in research settings hosting the research and/or introducing us to potential participants. Simultaneously we encourage and empower participants to act freely in the research environment. Furthermore, we need to embrace and enact these concepts, including additional responsibilities (drawn originally from biomedical research) about gaining and maintaining participants' informed consent. This is to be confident that potential participants understand what is being asked of them before agreeing to participate, and checking that this consent is maintained throughout their research experience. Gaining ongoing

consent is importantly about recognising that participants' perspectives and situations can change for a range of legitimate reasons.

Activity 6 Distinguishing permission from consent/assent and ensuring ongoing informed consent/assent

Allow approximately 10 minutes for Part A and 15 minutes for Part B

Part A

Consider the following definitions:

Permission

> If you give someone approval to do something, you are giving them permission. Think of the permission slip your parents sign to let you go on a field trip—they are approving your going on the trip. Permission has the same Latin root word as permit.
>
> (vocabulary.com, 2020a)

In research 'permission' generally refers to gatekeepers and/or research-setting leaders of host organisations who are able to introduce researchers to individuals or groups of potential participants in their care. In doing so, gatekeepers demonstrate that they trust the researchers, which can encourage people to participate. This can be invaluable to the researcher. Simultaneously, not to approach a gatekeeper/host before approaching participants of a group can be disruptive for a group's activities, wrong-foot group leaders and undermine their confidence in the research/researcher.

Consent

> Consent can only be given 'if he(sic) agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice'. ... Whether a complainant had the capacity (i.e. the age and understanding) to make a choice' – as worded as the statutory definition of consent in the UK (Section 74 of the rape and sexual offences legislation].
>
> (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017)

In research, consent and assent generally refer to potential participants agreeing to take part in research.

Informed consent

> Consent [for example] by a patient to undergo a medical or surgical treatment or to participate in an experiment after the patient understands the risks involved.
>
> (vocabulary.com, 2020b)

Informed consent in research emphasises the importance of a) participants being provided the fullest appropriate information, and b) that the researcher has ensured, as far as is possible, that participants have understood that information before seeking their 'informed' consent/assent. Ensuring understanding is of particular importance where information is difficult to understand, e.g. in the case of potential outcomes or risks of medical procedures, or when the potential participants have special needs to help them understand information. This could be because they are a child and do not have the life experience to understand aspects of research, or it could be an adult with special learning needs. It is always the responsibility of the researcher to present information in a way the potential participant is most able to understand.

Assent

> Assent is the expression of approval or agreement [such as] 'a loud murmur of assent' or 'he nodded assent'.
>
> (Lexico.com, 2020)

Assent is usually what is sought from those unable legally to give consent. This includes children and young people under the legal age of consent (technically minors) and other vulnerable populations who are considered unable to readily comprehend the requests of them – a legal guardian or responsible adult would need to be asked for consent on their behalf.

Nonetheless it remains important for the potential participant to be consulted and their ongoing informed consent secured. Often assent to support a potential participant's carer consent is used where the participant is unable to express or signal their agreement in standard ways. Researchers should always work with their legal guardians / responsible adults to satisfy those involved that the potential participant is assenting. This might be, for instance, by the responsible adult being able to read body language.

Seeking assent is an important part of a researcher's responsibilities to support children's rights under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This was established in 1989, and came into force in the UK in 1992 (UNICEF, 2019). In particular, the UNCRC states under article 12 that

> Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
>
> (UNICEF, 2019)

There are other special population groups (such as those with special learning needs) and particularly complex research topics (such as medical research) which raise challenges in securing informed consent/assent. Advice is available from specialist organisations who understand the needs of participants, e.g. this summary poster for good practice from the Learning Disability Health Facilitation Team and this NHS page about consent to treatment.

Each follows very similar principles which define valid consent/assent as that which is given voluntarily, by someone who is fully informed and has capability to understand the information given to inform them about the research.

Ongoing informed consent/assent

Consent and assent is not simply sought at the start of a research project, evidenced in signed consent forms and then forgotten. The researcher should remain alert throughout their work to positive signs of consent/assent throughout their work with participants. Often as research studies progress the participants will understand more about the study. Initial information provided will make more sense.

A reflexive researcher, constantly reviews the impact of day-to-day research interactions upon their participants and others involved. Planning a reflexive approach to research will help support participants ongoing informed consent/ assent.

Visit this Our Voices page about Reflexivity at the heart of ethical research. This advice is primarily designed for research about, with, and by children and young people, but the principles are widely applicable.

Consider Case study 2.1 again in relation to the following questions:

Think about:

- Who would the researchers have to initially ask for permission to access the setting?
- Who would the researchers have approached for consent?
- Who would the researchers have approached for assent?
- How would the researchers have evidenced informed consent and assent?
- How would the researchers have ensured the ongoing assent/consent of their participants?

Provide your answer...

Part B

What is involved in gaining informed consent/assent?

What is involved in retaining ongoing informed consent/assent?

The gatekeepers to this setting were likely to include the Ministry of Education, the regional education office and the headteacher of the school. If the school was funded or sponsored in some way, the leader of the partner organisation would also need to have been contacted. Consent would then need to be gained from individual class teachers and from the parents/carers/guardians of the children who would be observed. The children themselves should also have been asked to give their assent. How such consent was gained would need to take local recommen-dations into account, in order not to cause offence or disrespect. Those local recommendations could include local consideration of the age of majority. For instance in Scotland, young people can vote in Scottish Parliament elections and be

considered sufficiently informed and able to give consent to taking part in research without parental consent. In other countries that might be a lot younger still.

Gatekeepers to research participants are likely to have provided written, formal permissions to approach potential participants in the school. Potential participants must still give specific informed consent/assent to be included in a research study, supported if required by parent/carer/guardian consent if minors. That consent/assent should be collected in a way that can be stored to provide a record that ensures appropriate contact with participants.

The notion of informed consent comes from biomedicine, but the principles are used much more widely in research with people. Watch the following short video and, as you do so, replace in your mind 'doctor' with 'researcher' and 'patient' with 'research participant'.

The video entitled 'Informed Consent: in a patient's shoes' is 2 minutes 49 seconds in duration and won the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh skills video competition in 2017 (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

Note down the strategies recommended at the end of the video as valuable principles to consider when a researcher is informing potential research participants about the research in which they would like them to participate.

Provide your answer...

4.2 Putting potential participants' views first

Once a researcher is in a position to approach participants, they should find ways to feel confident that participants are truly volunteering to take part, with no sense of obligation or coercion and that they are properly informed. The researcher has an obligation to explain their research plans, state clearly what they will ask of participants and how they will respect the participants' rights, what benefits participants could expect from taking part, and how they can withdraw should they change their mind.

Activity 7 Thinking about participants' views

Allow approximately 15 minutes for Part A and 20 minutes for Part B

Part A

Choose one of the case studies (2.1 or 2.2) or the scenarios A–D in Activity 4 and use the following questions as prompts to help you to think about how you can put a participant's views first.

Think about:

1. What information would participants want to know before they agreed to participate?
2. What concerns might a participant have about their participation?
3. What are a participant's rights in terms of participating and in relation to the information the researcher is eliciting from them?

4. How can a researcher demonstrate their respect for participants' rights and be assured participants are fully informed?

[The Our Voices page about
Involving children and young people in all stages of research may prompt useful thoughts which are relevant to all ages and types of participants.]

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Participants have the right to be informed as fully as possible as to a researcher's requests of them and the possible implications of these requests, to help them decide voluntarily to participate. They might agree due to different motivations: to help others, to help the researcher, to help solve the problem or understand and tackle the issue the research is about, because they have been helped in a similar way. Each motivation might lead them to ask different questions of the researcher. In all cases, they should be reassured that the data they provide will be kept safely, they will not be misrepresented, that they will either not be identified or that their contribution will be attributed, that they can change their mind and that they can find out more about the research. In the next part of this activity, you will read a short article to help you imagine what might be involved in research with young children, where negotiating assent to participate is more complicated.

Part B

Figure 7 Is a baby crawling away from a research activity a sign of lack of assent?

Read the following post on the BERA blog (make sure to open this link in a new tab/ window so you can easily return to this page) written by researcher Liz Rouse about her reflections on 'informed consent and assent, and the ethical review process, with/for research with the very young' (Rouse, 2019).

In this study, Rouse did indeed use the non-verbal observation of babies crawling away from an activity forming part of the research to indicate their lack of assent to participate. This was just one form of evidence she used in what she terms a 'matrix of approaches' to gaining informed consent.

Returning to the thinking prompts in Part A, how might researchers need to act with participants below the legal age of consent, in order to be confident that participants:

- understand the research aims/intentions?
- understand their right to withdraw at any time?
- have any concerns addressed?
- are shown respect?

5 This session’s quiz

Well done – you have reached the end of Session 2. You can now check what you’ve learned this session by taking the end-of-session quiz.

Session 2 practice quiz

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

6 Summary of Session 2

Planning ethical research

In this session you have considered the many people involved in research who can both inform the research and potentially benefit from it. This places a responsibility on the researcher to be as informed as possible about potential participants' concerns (including those potentially excluded) in the study context when planning and designing their study. This shows how decisions about research design are linked to ethical considerations to ensure a study is justified.

A researcher should be able to present a balanced argument for why their study should be considered worthwhile. This includes stating clearly why they have a justifiable basis on which to proceed with their research requests and how they have considered possible risks of harm and mitigated against these.

In Session 3, you will think further about the ethical obligations a researcher has when planning their research. By thinking about the research plans from different stakeholder perspectives, a researcher can anticipate additional possible issues, consider alternatives and make responsible and respectful decisions. This will help researchers to negotiate with gatekeepers for permission to access a context and approach potential participants for their informed consent/assent.

In the next session you will be thinking about issues that arise as researchers move into their studies, either in the field or as part of desk-based research.

Activity 8 What is involved in planning ethical research?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

1. With reference to your notes from this session's study, create a mind map summarising the factors a researcher needs to consider when planning research (see Activities and tools for more information on how to create mind maps).
2. Take an image or screenshot of this mind map and store it safely so that you can return to it in the following weeks (see Taking screenshots for help with this). You can share this image with other learners by uploading this to the course forum thread and also see what others took away from this session.

   Note: In this forum post you may want to use an image, for advice on how to upload images to forum review our advice page.

You can now go to Session 3.

Session 3: Meeting obligations in research

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 Obligations are linked to our responsibilities, duties, needing to be compliant with regulations, policies, guidance and the business of others

Welcome to Session 3 of *Becoming an ethical researcher.*

In this session, you will look at the wider contexts in which research projects are set, in order to explore further how researchers have obligations and associated responsibilities to a wide range of other individuals. These external expectations of researchers ensure there is accountability for a researcher's actions and behaviours.

The ideas covered build on previous sessions where you thought about the potential beneficiaries of a project and the micro, meso and macro layers of those who might be involved in research.

This session covers legal obligations a researcher needs to be mindful of as well as how research guidance has developed to support researchers in their ethical decision-making. Thinking from the perspectives of the various stakeholders can help in anticipating issues and making more confident, respectful and responsible research decisions when planning research.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- identify to whom researchers are accountable
- understand the practical implications of showing a duty of care
- identify legal obligations which include those for data protection, respecting copyright and safeguarding
- explore strategies for addressing unanticipated issues during research by thinking through and being alert to a researcher's multiple responsibilities.

Activities

Session 3 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Drag and drop activity about stakeholder perspectives	20 minutes
2	Reflect on the implications of stakeholder expectations and post to course forum	40 minutes
3	Watch three videos about different guidance frameworks Reflect on guidance	20 minutes 20 min-utes
4	Vote in two polls to identify data which would fall under the data protection regulations	15 minutes
5	An activity identifying personal and sensitive data sources	15 minutes
6	An activity about ways to maintain confidentiality	20 minutes
7	Reflect on research scenarios	20 minutes
	Session 3 quiz	As required
8	List useful documents	10 minutes

1 Being held accountable

Figure 2 What does successful undertaking of research look like?

Being called to account or held accountable can be defined as:

> to answer for responsibilities and conduct; required or expected to justify one's actions, decisions, etc.; answerable, responsible
>
> (Lexico.com, 2020).

In terms of research, this means researchers need to be aware:

- of their responsibilities – both in terms of what is required of them (things they must do) and what is expected of them (things others think they should do)
- that their conduct and behaviour is a key measure by which others are likely to judge their success in meeting their responsibilities
- that they should be prepared to justify their decision-making.

Having identified that there are a range of stakeholders to whom the researcher will be responsible and accountable, it is also evident that researchers themselves will have their own expectations and hopes for the research. This means that the success of the research could be measured in different ways, which might lead to tensions as the research proceeds. Differences will depend on the agendas, interests and assumptions of others mediated by their knowledge and understanding of the research being planned.

1.1 Researcher accountabilities

The British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (2024) are helpful when thinking about researcher accountabilities. This guidance is organised according to five sets of responsibilities, to:

1. participants
2. sponsors, clients, stakeholders and the environment
3. the community of educational researchers
4. publication and dissemination
5. researchers' wellbeing and development.

It is notable that the environment was added to the 2024 (5th) edition of these guidelines, to recognise the roles of research towards environmental sustainability. This fits in with a wider movement to include attention to the consequences of research on the environment. This has been captured in a Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice (EAUC, n.d.).

> The UK research and innovation (R&I) sector have co-developed a voluntary environmental sustainability concordat. The concordat represents a shared ambition for the UK to continue delivering cutting-edge research, but in a more environmentally responsible and sustainable way.
>
> (EAUC, n.d.)

Some research funders, for example Wellcome, are requiring that research institutions whose research they fund are signatories to this Concordat. The Open University became a signatory in January 2025.

To help you think about this range of responsibilities, consider Case study 3.1 on the next page.

1.2 Participatory research

Case study 3.1 Participatory research with girls in Zimbabwe

The Supporting Adolescent Girls' Education (SAGE) project, in which The Open University is the academic lead, is co-designing an accelerated learning programme and materials, co-supporting community educators and buddy teachers. The community educators facilitate learning sessions for the girls in the Learning Hubs. The buddy teachers form a learning support network with the community educators. The OU is also leading on two participatory research studies which explore the aspirations of out-of-school girls and peer support relationships between community educators and buddy teachers.

The girls will enrol in a two-year programme of accelerated learning in foundational literacy and supporting them in achieving Grade 5 outcomes. On completion of the programme, girls will transition onto clear and supported pathways to further training, income generation or continuation of mainstream education. In addition to improving educational outcomes, SAGE will support adolescent girls having increased self-efficacy and life skills. As a result, the girls and their families will acquire skills and have increased access to financial resources. Through gender sensitisation, communities will adopt more positive gender attitudes and will take action to support and protect girls. The project works with local communities and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in ways that will enable communities to sustain their Learning Hubs after the end of the project, and for these Hubs to be recognised within the mainstream education system.

Activity 1 Imagining stakeholder expectations

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Listen to a short audio by two of the researchers leading the SAGE project.

Audio content is not available in this format.

SAGE project audio

Thinking about the BERA (2024) set of responsibilities, identify the different stakeholders in this study.

For each stakeholder, imagine what they might expect from the researchers and hence the different obligations the researchers might feel towards them. Drag and drop these to match below.

Stakeholders

Funder

Partners/co-researchers

National government

Current participants

Future participants

The Zimbabwean education system

The researchers

Other researchers as an academic audience

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Possible stakeholder expectations of researchers

Continued support in participating in education and training, leading to increased literacy, numeracy and English language skills, so increasing employability.

To learn more about the barriers to school participation by girls with a view to understanding how their own research can contribute, without having to replicate the interventions and intrusion on disadvantaged girls' lives.

Opportunities to get to know the participants and be accepted into the local community. Safety to be afforded to them in local contexts.

Increased attendance by girls in schools in ways that can be accommodated by the existing system. This should include advice about what they can continue to do to support this sustainably.

Increased educational participation for the whole population, which can lead to greater workforce capacity and economic success for the population.

Value for money, which might be imagined as evidence of increased attendance by girls in school.

Reduction of barriers to attending and participating fully in education and training.

To be included in all aspects of the decision-making.

Discussion

It is clear that researchers have multiple responsibilities and that these might lead to tensions and competing obligations. Later in this course you will have a chance to think about how to navigate a virtuous path through these obligations.

Dealing with competing accountabilities is something organisational leaders incorporate into their everyday work. They are responsible to the employees in their setting, to their clients, to their shareholders and to the wider associations within which the organisation holds membership.

1.3 Accountability

This next case study will get you to consider how such accountabilities might affect a setting's openness to embrace research.

Case study 3.2 Accountability in Canadian schools

Video content is not available in this format.

Canadian schools

Watch the 3 minute 39 second video talking about accountability within Canadian schools in Alberta, focusing on the Victoria School in Edmonton.

You will hear how leaders are acutely aware of their accountability to the public, including parents, which national authorities monitor through inspections focused on the headteacher. Teachers talk about how senior leaders then expect individual teachers to be accountable for the performance of their students. However, while they monitor attainment through student grades achieved, it is the engagement of staff and students that is considered most vital in driving up standards. Such pressures on employees and organisational leaders can be easily applied to other work settings.

Activity 2 Setting accountabilities affecting researcher accountabilities

Allow approximately 40 minutes

Part A

Imagine you are a researcher intending to research this Canadian school to examine the experiences of the lower-attaining students.

Identify the concerns and expectations you think the following stakeholders might raise if they were to receive your request, bearing in mind their own accountabilities and interests as leaders associated with the school.

a. the school headteacher
b. a school class teacher
c. parents of children at the school
d. the regional inspector

What might you need to promise each of the above as you negotiate your plans to research this topic in their school?

Which, if any, tensions can you anticipate between what the various stakeholders might expect of you?

Provide your answer...

Part B

Choose one of the stakeholders (a) to (d). Write a short post on the course forum that summarises two of the promises you would make to them and up to two of the issues they might raise for you, which your research plans might need to accommodate.

Insights can also be gained from these case studies if you think of researchers as leaders, due to holding multiple accountabilities. Leading a research project means the researcher will take on multiple responsibilities and will be required to show academic leadership in managing those responsibilities.

Just as a school needs to offer a quality education to its students, so a researcher needs to produce a study of quality. A study, like a school, will be judged by the wider public as well as those involved directly during and beyond its activity. Like the school leader in this case study, your values and vision for your research should drive your leadership of it, rather than your study being overly affected by the external accountability measures of it. If you think the research needs to develop in particular ways that show integrity to your values, then you should feel you have the autonomy or the ‘academic freedom’ to do so. You will be held accountable, however, and you should expect to defend your decisions and ensure that they are acceptable and approved by those in your research setting. Your research will need to fit in with the internal and external obligations of those in your chosen research setting.

2 Ethical guidelines for researchers

Figure 3 Three key professional associations offering ethical guidance

Ethical guidance for researchers can be gained from professional associations related to a researcher's field of research, either as signed-up members of these associations or by reference to them as public documents. These can be national or internationally available and complement the guidance provided by individual organisations such as a researcher's host university.

Activity 3 Ethical guidance in the social sciences

Allow approximately 20 minutes for Part A and 20 minutes for Part B

Part A

Watch each of the three screencasts in which academics from The Open University introduce ethical guidance from these key associations:

1. Association of Internet Researchers – an international association based in the United States of America

Video content is not available in this format.

Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0
Association of Internet Researchers

Unanimously approved by the AoIR membership October 6, 2019

aline shakti franzke (University of Duisburg-Essen), Co-Chair
Anja Bechmann (Aarhus University), Co-Chair,
Michael Zimmer (Marquette University), Co-Chair,
Charles M. Ess (University of Oslo), Co-Chair and Editor

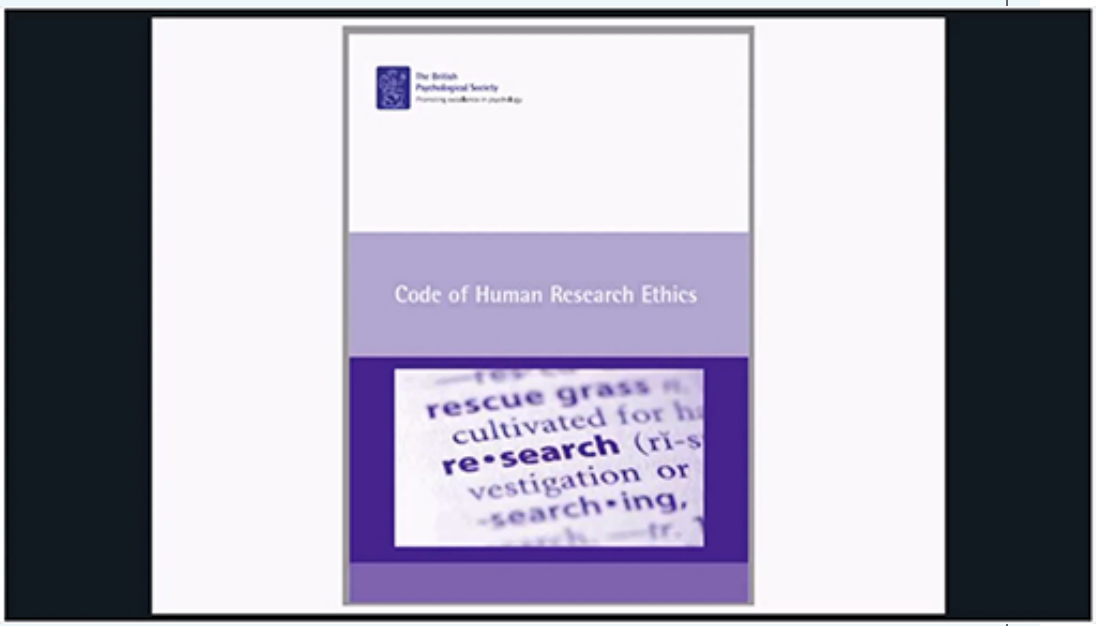
The AoIR IRE 3.0 Ethics Working Group, including: David J. Brake, Ane Kathrine Gammelby, Nele Heise, Anne Hove Henriksen, Soraj Hongladarom, Anna Jobin, Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda, Sun Sun Lim, Elisabetta Locatelli, Annette Markham, Paul J. Reilly, Katrin Tiidenberg and Carsten Wilhelm.[1]

2. British Educational Research Association

Video content is not available in this format.

3. British Psychological Society

Video content is not available in this format.



(Please note: this video refers to the 2014 version of the British Psychological Society guidance. A more recent edition was published in 2021.)

Part B

Think about:

- commonalities between the approaches taken by the three associations to ethical guidance
- at least one aspect of each guidance that is unique.

These are not the only professional and research associations producing ethical guidance; a list of other guidance that might be relevant is included in the further reading section at the end of this session.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Overarching all of the disciplines in what might be termed ‘the social sciences’ is the guidance offered by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2022 – see further reading section), which would need to be followed by any researcher whose study was funded by this Council. The individual associations, as well as universities providing guidance to their researchers, also ensure their own ethical research guidance fits with that of the ESRC. There is equivalent ethical guidance in the other UK research councils, which are all governed by advice by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO, 2023 – see further reading section).

What you will find in common across this guidance is that it is revised and that these revisions are generated consultatively. Each edition reviews the principles and values used to underpin the guidance. Any revisions are made in response to issues that have become apparent in the preceding years, and anticipate what is needed to support a contemporary researcher undertaking a study in the relevant field. They are increasingly non-prescriptive, without ‘should’ or ‘must’ being used. This empowers a researcher to use the advice in appropriate ways befitting their own context and values. For this, a researcher needs to be deliberative, which means that they need to make informed and reasoned choices to justify their actions.

3 Legal responsibilities

The ethical guidance provided by universities and by associations needs to fit within national legislative guidance. Researchers must abide by the laws of the country.

There are three main areas of legislation that affect social science researchers:

- data protection
- copyright
- safeguarding.

You will now look at each of these areas in turn.

3.1 Data protection

Researchers collect data that is often personal or sensitive. These two terms have specific legal meanings within the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) to which the UK Data Protection Act (2018) was then aligned, and is often referred to as UK GDPR. While the UK GDPR does not refer only to data collected for research purposes, but to all data collection and use (termed in the documentation as data processing), it is still relevant to research data. Universities, funders and those within particular settings such as schools, youth groups, local authorities, will expect researchers to abide by the local and current data protection regulations and to have a data management plan for any personal or sensitive data.

Personal data is defined within the UK GDPR as:

> any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified in particular by reference to an identifier. This definition provides for a wide range of personal identifiers to constitute personal data, including name, identification number, location data or online identifier, reflecting changes in technology and the way organisations collect information about people. The [UK] GDPR applies to both automated personal data and to manual filing systems... This could include chronologically ordered sets of manual records containing personal data. Personal data that has been pseudonymised – e.g. key-coded – can fall within the scope of the [UK] GDPR depending on how difficult it is to attribute the pseudonym to a particular individual.
>
> (Information Commissioner's Office, n.d.)

Personal data includes audio and visual data, as well as that held as text or in numeric format.

Sensitive data or 'special categories of personal data' are defined within the UK GDPR as follows:

> Special category data is personal data which the UK GDPR says is more sensitive, and so needs more protection. These include:
>
> - race
> - ethnic origin
> - politics
> - religion
> - trade union membership
> - genetics

- biometrics (where used for ID purposes)
- health
- sex life
- sexual orientation.

In order to lawfully process special category data, you must identify both a lawful basis under Article 6 and a separate condition for processing special category data under Article 9. These do not have to be linked.

You must determine your condition for processing special category data before you begin this processing under the [UK] GDPR, and you should document it.

(Information Commissioner's Office, n.d)

Applying the information you have reviewed so far about what counts as personal and sensitive data, test your understanding in Activity 4.

Activity 4 What is personal or sensitive data – legally?

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Click through to each poll below and give your answer to the following questions. After making your choice and viewing the results, use your browser's back button to return to this page and then click the 'Answer' tab.

Poll 1 Which of the following data being exchanged do you think meets the criteria for personal data? You can vote for more than one scenario.

Poll 2 Which of the following data collected about you would be classed as 'sensitive'? You can vote for more than one scenario.

Answer

Poll 1: Scenario 1 (this would be correct); Scenario 2 (this would be incorrect); Scenario 3 (this would be correct as it was recorded).

Poll 2: Data type 1 (this would be incorrect); Data type 2 (this would be correct); Data type 3 (this would be incorrect).

What is needed to fulfil the General Data Protection Regulations

Figure 4 Key questions to consider when meeting the UK General Data Protection Regulation

A privacy notice is a document referred to in the UK GDPR/UK Data Protection Act (2018) advice. This should explain to the people who are being requested to provide personal and/or sensitive data that it will be processed fairly, lawfully and transparently. The privacy notice must inform people who the data controller is, what they are going to do with the information and with whom it will be shared. It needs to include details of people's rights to access their data and the length of time it will be retained. In research, this is to be included in the setting and participant information letters that researchers use to explain their research plans to those from whom they need to get approval (e.g. university ethical review boards or government ministries), permissions (e.g. gatekeepers) and to gain informed consent from their participants and/or their carers/parents/guardians.

The privacy notice/information letter should refer to the ways the principles of UK GDPR will be put into practice. These are principles of:

- lawfulness, fairness, transparency
- purpose limitation
- data minimisation
- accuracy
- storage limitation
- integrity and confidentiality.

When data is shared with another data controller/processor for joint purposes, a data sharing agreement is required, especially if there is to be transfer of data from or to the UK.

Activity 5 Data management planning

Allow approximately 15 minutes

If the principles of UK GDPR are turned into questions, a researcher can ask these when planning to collect personal data.

1. Is it justifiable and legal to collect this data?

2. Will you collect data that is limited to a stated purpose?
3. Will the data collected be limited to only that which is needed for the stated purpose?
4. Will the data collected be checked for accuracy and kept up to date whilst being stored? (Participants, called ‘data subjects’ according to UK GDPR, have rights for this to be the case and can ask for this to be checked).
5. Will the data be stored only for the time period that matches the stated purpose?
6. Will the data be stored (and transferred) safely and kept confidential?

Refer to the table you reviewed in Activity 9 of Session 1, replicated below. Choose from the drop-down menu in the final column with a P or S which forms of data could be classed as personal (P) or sensitive (S) data, both or neither.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Anonymisation, deidentification and protection of privacy

Figure 5 Sometimes deidentifying techniques need to be employed by researchers to protect individuals

For those data considered personal and/or sensitive, questions such as those in Activity 5 would need to be asked and, to meet legal obligations, privacy notice information provided

to participants. However, to show respect, ethically, all forms of data should have the same data protection considerations, and information should be provided to the participants about how the data will be handled and stored.

You will see from the suggested data sources that anonymisation is referred to in several cases, and that these can then be considered protected from being considered personal or sensitive data. Anonymisation and deidentification are key techniques for a researcher to help protect an individual's rights to privacy (as summarised in Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Anonymising and deidentifying

Anonymous data is data in which the identities of those providing it are not known to the researcher – and hence to an eventual reader of the research. UK GDPR (and other equivalent regulations) does not apply to such data. (See Recital 26 of GDPR – open link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page.)

Data can be **anonymised** by removing personal identifiers so that the individual providing the data cannot be recognised. This might involve removing names, addresses, postcodes and contact numbers and amending photographs, other images or audio data. It might also involve offering to replace names with pseudonyms (false names).

Deidentification might also be needed to protect the identities of individuals by removing indirectly identifiable information that a reader could use by combining sources of information to identify the context (and hence individuals). This might involve removing reference to particular features of the setting or specific names of roles of those in the setting.

The ICO's Code of Conduct on Anonymisation (2012) provides further guidance on anonymisation techniques.

3.2 Safeguarding

Figure 6 Can we keep everything we are told confidential?

Offering confidentiality has already been mentioned as important for showing respect. If you are a professional and know the professional code to which you are beholden, then you will be aware of the limits to confidentiality professionals can offer. Professionals have legal responsibilities related to safeguarding and protection of both children and

vulnerable adults to help protect their rights under the Care Act (HM Government, 2014) and the Children Act (HM Government, 2004). In terms of their protection, this means that there is a collective responsibility to share information about criminal activity or circumstances which appear to threaten a minor or vulnerable adult's safety or wellbeing, if this is disclosed. This legal obligation affects us all as we work as researchers collecting data from human participants; and a child-centred approach, with accountability, is advocated in UK government advice 'Working Together to Safeguard Children':

> 14. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs.
>
> (HM Government, 2023, p. 12)

> 199. Key decisions should be recorded and communicated to both the child and their parents or carers, so that everyone understands the action that has, or will be, taken to safeguard and promote their welfare.
>
> (ibid, p. 69)

Activity 6 Maintaining confidentiality

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Interactive content is not available in this format.

As will be covered more fully in Session 6, when looking at reporting and disseminating research, confidentiality (and associated anonymity) is sometimes found to be in tension with copyright laws and the rights others have for their original work to be acknowledged. This mainly affects published work, which researchers draw on and want to cite. A summary of these rights can be found at the University of Nottingham's copyright basics webpage and the implications for researchers, especially aimed at doctoral researchers, can be found at the University of Nottingham's copyright and research webpage. (Open the links in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl [or Cmd on a Mac] when you click on the link.)

4 Dealing with unexpected circumstances

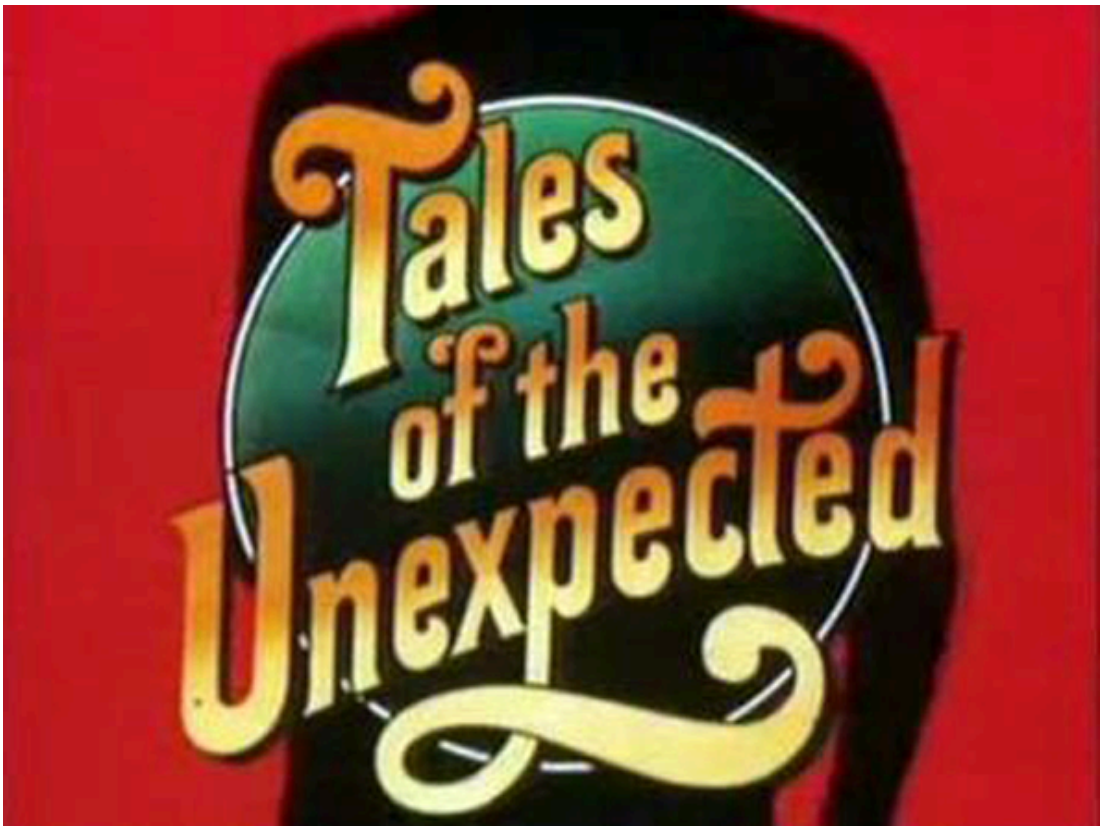


Figure 7 Researchers should expect the unexpected…

However thoughtfully a researcher (and those advising them) have tried to anticipate issues that might arise to challenge their respectful approach to engaging with stakeholders, including gatekeepers and participants, uncomfortable circumstances can still arise. In order to meet their responsibilities, an ethical researcher will need to respond to these issues.

Activity 7 What would YOU have done?

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Read the following four scenarios experienced by the researchers you were introduced to in Session 1. If you were the researchers, what would you do? (If you want to listen to the audios again, return to Session 1, Activity 6.)

The first two relate to Kate Breeze and the second two to Teresa Cremin.

> **Scenario 1:** Kate became aware that the hourly-paid youth workers she had been researching were not part of the process for revising policy and practice to which she had been invited.
> **Scenario 2:** Kate noticed that the youth workers were put in risky situations when they were working in the outdoor centre which had not been thought about by their employers.
> **Scenario 3:** Teresa became aware that the sharing of writing was a really personal experience and, although the teachers on the course had given

consent for the training sessions to be recorded, this might not be something they would feel comfortable with now on the course.

Scenario 4: Teresa had gained consent to include anonymised writings from the teachers in her research reports, but came to appreciate that those on the courses would recognise one another, even if the names of everyone referred to and the author were removed.

Think about:

- What options the researcher had.
- Why you would choose your particular course of action.
- What the researcher could have done to prevent this situation or why they couldn't have anticipated it.

Discussion

The issues these researchers experienced are common to many researchers working with human participants and organisations. In each case, the researcher was able to discuss these difficult experiences with those in their research setting so that local, constructive solutions were found. To recognise the sensitivities around these issues for those in their research, the researchers made especially sure in their final published work that participants (or, in the case of Kate's work, also the organisations involved) could not be identified. They applied some of the anonymisation and deidentification techniques covered earlier in this session.

5 This session’s quiz

Now it’s time to complete the Session 3 badge quiz. It is similar to previous quizzes, but this time instead of answering five questions there will be fifteen.

Session 3 compulsory badge quiz

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you’re not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window then come back here when you’ve finished.

6 Summary of Session 3

In this session, you have thought further about planning research by examining the range of obligations to which a researcher is accountable and how a researcher can show academic leadership in meeting their various responsibilities. You have been introduced to a range of ethical guidance for researchers in the social sciences. This guidance is regularly updated and designed to alert readers to issues they should consider and guide their decision-making.

This session, as with the guidance, makes clear that researchers need to ensure that they abide by key legislation, particularly around protecting personal and sensitive data, as well as safeguarding those involved with the research. This means that researchers are clear that they have an obligation to share in the care of others in society, in particular children and vulnerable adults. Issues can arise during the conduct and reporting of research, and a researcher needs to continue to act with integrity to meet the expectations of others and their promises.

In the following sessions, you will be thinking further about conducting research ethically, about how power and relationships are key considerations and how responsibilities do not end with the collection of data.

Activity 8 Preparing a list of resources

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Referring to your notes from this session, create a list of documents you would need to refer to when designing research, even if this is a general list of key information rather than specific types of documents and links.

You are now halfway through the course. The Open University would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future improvement in our optional end-of-course survey, which you will also have an opportunity to complete at the end of Week 6. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

You can now go to Session 4.

Session 4: Showing respect in research

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 Thinking about vulnerability, power and respect

Welcome to Session 4 of *Becoming an ethical researcher*.

In this session you will again step into the shoes of a researcher to focus on how you would respond respectfully to challenges you might encounter. As you have already seen, there is no ‘one size fits all’ formula for carrying out ethical research that suits every situation, but you can weigh up options by thinking through key principles. Key principles, like respect and dignity, are the building blocks of the ethical guidelines you explored in Session 3.

Respect is a key principle for this session with overlapping issues of power, participation, vulnerability and voice all impacting on research relationships. Respect in this context refers to research relationships with participants, gatekeepers and other stakeholders in the research, whether online, in person or via representation from historic documents. Respect is also important in terms of respecting researcher safety and boundaries.

Acknowledging respect also means being aware of and transparent about differences in power that may reflect wider societal or institutional inequalities. For example, Anderson and Morrow (2020) argue that ethical ‘research reveals, instead of conceals’ (p. 178) the inequalities between adults and children.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- appreciate the importance of respect as a key principle in conducting research
- make links between respect, vulnerability, voice, participation and power in relation to ethical research issues
- consider how different research designs and methods can shift issues of power
- understand the importance of researcher safety
- compare your emerging research ideas with others.

Activities

Session 4 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Read a case study and respond to prompts	10 minutes
2	Read guidelines and design a mind map	20 minutes
3	Review the list of possibilities and reflect	5 minutes
4	Watch a video, then listen to an audio and answer prompts	15 minutes
5	Post on the course forum	20 minutes
6	Making adaptations activity	5 minutes
7	Listen to audio and reflect on case study	10 minutes
8	Use prompts to reflect on case study	10 minutes
9	Watch a video Listen to an audio and reflect Complete mix and match	5 minutes (Part A) 10 minutes (Part B) 5 minutes (Part C)
	Session 4 quiz	As required
10	Takeaways: Add to mind map from Activity 2	5 minutes

1 Showing respect in research

Figure 2 Respecting the views and preferences of others, however seemingly vulnerable: inspiration from the artist Frida Kahlo, who was born with spina bifida and injured in a tram crash

In Session 2 you were introduced to the idea of data as a gift. Data, whether in the form of numbers, images or words, needs to be handled with care and respect. Data collection from a survey, from social interaction online or from observing someone's home or classroom raises different ethical challenges.

Respect refers to individuals as well as groups and to each and every person's contribution during the research process. It is not just about saying 'thank you'. Participants who provide the data trust that a researcher will put it to good use. They need to not take from it more than they have permission for, neither should it be misused. So, although it might seem obvious that research will be designed to have benefits, without a researcher showing ethical awareness, there is a risk of unintentionally causing harm before, during or after the research.

1.1 Respect when collecting data

Respect is also relevant to the work of researchers even before field work or desk work begins. For example, when finding out what has been already researched to inform the design for new research questions. At this stage, researchers need to be in touch with gatekeepers and partners for necessary permissions or clearance. These are obligations, but they are more than that: they are a courtesy which offers respect by seeking clearance and by showing that there is transparency and a serious commitment about the purpose of the research, and that people's time and expertise will be respected.

The first activity is about practicing respect during research. You will think about how a researcher should go beyond fulfilling obligations and build into the research design behaviours that will enable respectful responses to challenges that may occur during the study.

Activity 1 Just a quick chat

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Consider this scenario and reflect on the discussion prompts:

Imagine you are a charity volunteer supporting 'reading for pleasure' by offering to read with small groups of children in a library during the summer holidays. This is your passion as a retired classroom assistant and parent of reluctant readers.

As you are leaving one day, the charity manager asks for a quick chat about what you have learnt about children's reading preferences and makes notes as you talk. You have been volunteering for three years and have many anecdotal reflections to share. The conversation continues for an hour.

To your surprise, at the end of the chat, the manager mentions that they are completing a university dissertation research project, but does not elaborate. You feel uncomfortable as you have mentioned many children and their experiences and are unsure what this means, and whether it is worth complaining.

Think about:

- Why might the chat/interview have been conducted in this way?
- What might you have felt about this experience and whether you too would have felt uncomfortable?
- Why might you not have felt like complaining?
- Suggest alternative approaches to conducting this research.

Provide your answer...

Although the scenario in Activity 1 seems like a polite exchange, the example shows a lack of transparency and planning from the manager *as a researcher* and a lack of respect for ethical principles to both the volunteer, as the individual providing data, and those about whom the volunteer was speaking.

If you were in the shoes of this volunteer, you might feel confused and vulnerable about the mixed messages. On the one hand, having a chat sounds less formal and non-threatening compared to an interview, but the boundaries become blurred when it turns out that the chat was actually a data-gathering exercise. You were not asked for consent

or given any information in advance. You don't know who or what the research is for or where or how your words will be used. Without this information, you can't evaluate whether you think the study might be useful, or whether the identities of the children you have mentioned will be protected.

You might not like to complain because the manager is in a paid position and invites you into their setting as a volunteer: in this context, they have some power in the relationship. While you are willing to share your views and passions about reading, you still don't like being put on the spot and you were not expecting to give up an hour at no notice.

1.2 Research on or with?

Apart from a basic lack of information, consent seeking and respect for people's time, the scenario you considered in Activity 1 represents a missed opportunity to share power and leadership. One alternative could have been for the charity manager to respect the volunteer's experience and autonomy and send questions to think about in advance. Or the focus could have been to find out the views of the children in the reading group.

Instead of research being done to or on someone (with them seen as the subject or object of research), it could be done with or alongside them (as participant or even co-researcher).

1.3 Do no harm

In the scenario in Activity 1, perhaps you thought that a 'quick chat' could not do much harm. After all, the topic of reading for pleasure seems to be uncontroversial. As a former teaching assistant, you would probably already have limited the personal information you provided during the chat/interview due to your professional awareness of child and data protection. You know the charity manager and can follow up with them about the course of the study and raise any issues at a later date if you feel your instinctive fears have some grounds for complaint.

However, when you change the research to a sensitive topic, change the age or mental capacity of the participant/s or change to an anonymous digital setting, then such poor practice could have much more serious consequences. By taking part in research, participants can be left in a vulnerable position around privacy, confidentiality or emotional harm associated with thinking about sensitive topics.

It is crucial therefore that researchers anticipate vulnerability, either pre-existing or potentially caused by their research, and seek to recognise and mitigate for any harm that might be caused.

1.4 Guidance on showing respect

Guidance within different professional ethical codes of practice will refer to respect. In Activity 2, you will start to find your way around the professional codes of ethics most relevant to you, three of which you were introduced to in Session 3.

Here is one example from the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Ethics

> Psychologists have respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons. In the research context this means that there is a clear duty to participants. For example, psychologists respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of participants and potential participants… Given this level of respect psychologists are naturally willing to 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, for example, in participant selection or in the content of the research itself.

(British Psychological Society, 2014, p. 24)

Activity 2 Respect mind map

Allow approximately 20 minutes

- Go to one of the professional codes covered in Session 3 Activity 3, now shown below (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).
  - Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) (2020) Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0.
  - British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2024) Ethical guidelines for educational research.
  - British Psychological Society (BPS) (2021) Code of Human Research Ethics.
- Search for the word ‘respect’ in a section of interest to you.
- Make a diagram or mind map to show the links between respect and other key ideas you have met in other sessions. For example: respect and obligation, dignity, privacy.
- Keep adding any examples or references to respect as you come across them (you may share your mind map in the course forum later).

2 Respecting vulnerability in research

Figure 3 Respect means anticipating the vulnerability of participants

Would you want one of your family members or colleagues to take part in research that might open the door to exposing your family or team in a less than favourable light?

Be aware that research can make people vulnerable due to the topic, the context or because participants are themselves part of a vulnerable group in society. It can make people vulnerable when including them by posing a risk, or by excluding them through omitting their voice. Being ethical about the possible risks of research means anticipating and then respecting the vulnerability of participants, as well as taking care of the vulnerability and safety of researchers.

Activity 3 Who is vulnerable?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

For each example in Table 4.1 below, respond (with yes, no or depends) if you think collecting data in each example might raise issues of vulnerability.

In the final column, indicate from the choices offered (group, topic, context or not applicable) the reason for the vulnerability. Use 'not applicable' in the examples for which you have answered no to the first question. You will have a chance to discuss your ideas about vulnerability on the course forum in Activity 5.

Table 4.1 Thinking about vulnerability

Who?	**Could indicate vulnerability?** (Yes/no/depends)	**Why?** (group, topic, context or not applicable)
1. Young person, 19, conducting participatory workshop on teenage pregnancy and sexual health.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
2. Researcher recording audio interviews with parents in home-school group.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
3. Documentary research in census pre-1911 using outdated/offensive terms for disability.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
4. Filming play at home of child under 16 with communication impairment.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
5. Seeking consent from parent with limited English to film classroom of child under 16.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
6. Analysing nurses' reflective journals on different nursing experiences.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
7. Large-scale online survey of women's perceptions of body image.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
8. Researcher conducting psychology experiment on eye tracking and paintings.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

9. Conducting focus group with young adults after leaving care on their fostering and care home experiences.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
10. Visual analysis of drawings of conflict by displaced people.	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

All of the examples you considered in Activity 3 might involve a degree of vulnerability, but not all can be predicted.

- Research involving vulnerable groups might include those identified legally as a child, needing consent to be given by a parent/guardian, as well as them being approached directly. This is certainly the case with under-16s in the UK, and might also include all those under 18, depending on whether individuals are considered to have the mental capacity to give their own consent/assent and this is accepted at the organisational level of their setting e.g. sixth-form, further education college or care setting. Reduced capacity to consent might also include adults with cognitive impairment, language or literacy difficulties. Consent should therefore be sought in age- and developmental-appropriate ways which give respect and meet legal obligations.
- Research involving sensitive topics that might cause offence, distress or violate privacy – such as sexual health, historical constructions of disability, body image, looked after children or experiences of conflict and fragile environments like war – all have the potential to make participants and researchers vulnerable. As well as participants, researchers visiting a home or some settings might be vulnerable physically or emotionally without risk analysis, debriefing or appropriate psychosocial support.

Think about:

Do you think this implies avoiding any vulnerable groups or sensitive topics, for example in the areas you might want to research?

Provide your answer...

Reflect on when you might choose to read and analyse the research of others instead of conducting research yourself. Imagine carrying out a risk assessment and then proceeding with caution, being aware that ethical dilemmas might arise and how you might need to adapt a design to be more inclusive. Research often needs courage and other similar virtues to deal with challenges. You will consider this further in the next section.

2.1 Research often needs courage

Figure 4 Having courage

Case study 4.1 shows how research can impact on a large number of beneficiaries and how working with vulnerable groups can have gains for all through inclusive practice.

Case study 4.1 Research on inclusive practice: Signalong Indonesia

Professor Kieron Sheehy has researched inclusive practice globally (e.g. Sheehy et al., 2019). He worked with the Indonesian government then with teacher training colleges, teachers and students to improve practice and influence policy (Budiyanto et al., 2018). This involved drawing on best practice research, understanding attitudes towards disability and pedagogy and developing new methods of signing and teaching to include all children in classrooms. Over many years, the research team developed research relationships with a wide range of people.

Activity 4 Signalong Indonesia circles of relationships

Allow approximately 15 minutes

The project is called ‘Signalong Indonesia’ as it created a new method of signing for language and hearing-impaired children from which all children could benefit.

First watch this video (up to 01:26) which sets the context of the project.

Video content is not available in this format.

Signalong Indonesia

Then listen to the audio clip where Kieron describes in more detail how the research focus developed.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Think about:

- Why is this research important?
- Who might benefit from this research? Consider the micro (within the project), meso (local) and macro (national and international) scales.
- Identify potentially vulnerable groups and topics.

Also think about the vulnerability of the children and the need for appropriate ways to approach the research with teachers and parents. In many ways the project has the potential to change practices and develop understanding for children, families and practitioners wherever they are in the world. As the focus was on inclusive classrooms, the project developed methods from which all children could benefit and that all teachers would find manageable to use.

Provide your answer...

To find out more about the project, visit the Signalong Indonesia website (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

3 Voice and respect

Figure 5 Are writing and speaking the only ways to have a voice?

In this section, you will consider ways to conduct research fairly with all participants, including vulnerable groups, and how to show respect and give a voice to participants.

In a study about teachers, you might expect to consult teachers. In a study about children, is it so easy to collect data from participants? What about children with physical disabilities, or children excluded from school, or children who do not share a language with the researcher? These issues would also be the same with adults who are vulnerable in some way, including those with other languages to the researcher.

3.1 Children's participation

Do you consider children to be experts on their own experiences and lives? If so, how can they safely participate in research to share insight on their world views? Article 13 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) can be summarised as:

> Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.
>
> (UNICEF, 2019, p. 1)

Perhaps you have come across quotations or drawings from children in reports, or in studies where children have been conducting their own research. The level of participation of children may vary from tokenism to leadership and empowerment.

According to a human rights perspective, children are capable of offering opinions and decision-making and should be encouraged to so do. This philosophy recognises

children's essential agency and respects their right to participate and contribute a voice but, according to differences in sociocultural norms, may be difficult to fully realise.

Hart (1992) categorised different levels of children and young people's involvement in projects as a ladder. Think about your experience or views on participation according to this classification:

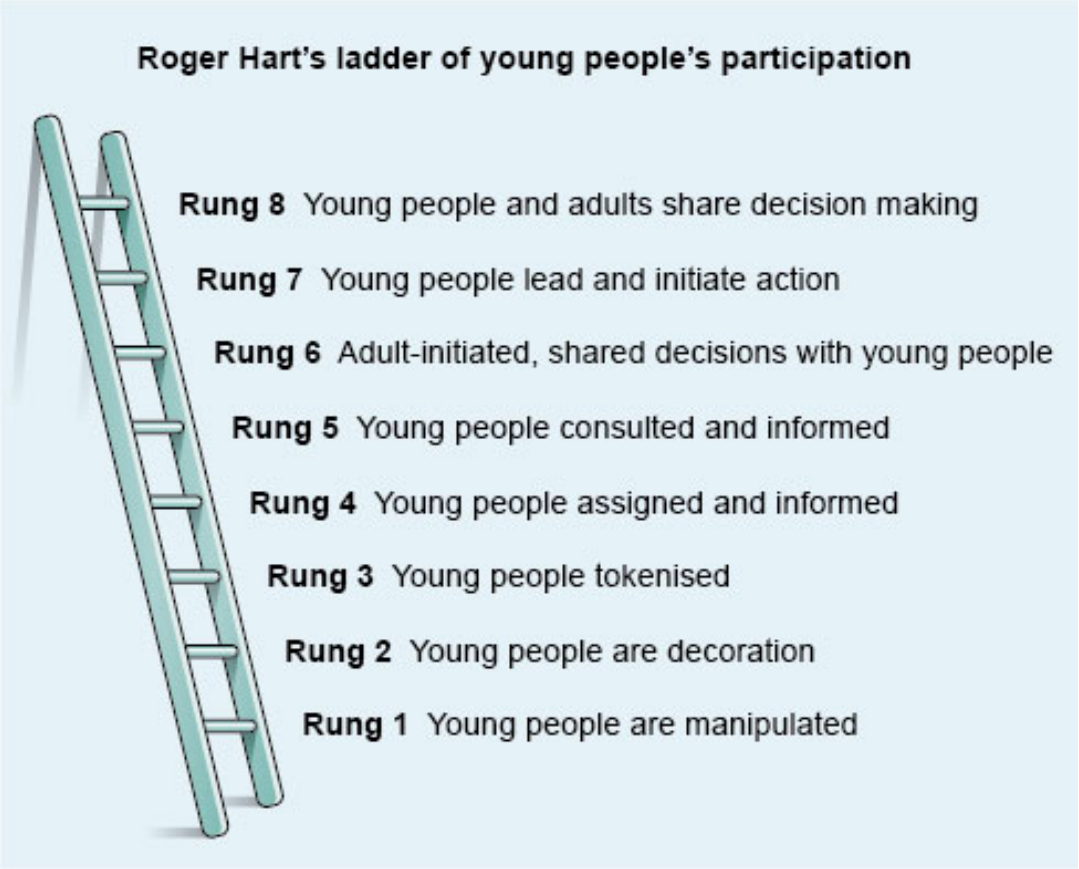


Figure 6 Hart's ladder of participation

Activity 5 Enabling participation

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Think about how you might apply Hart's ladder of participation to a setting you have read about or know.

Post to the course forum, giving examples about children's participation with which you are familiar and identifying which rung they would fit into on the ladder. Explain where the setting is for your example, without giving names.

You might want to include why you think your example was not higher on the ladder. What are the barriers and why? Think about the way contexts enable or constrain your example.

You might also want to include any thoughts you have on the model itself and whether you agree with the descriptions of each rung in the order they are presented.

Look at the responses of others to see a range of examples enabling children's participation.

3.2 Consent from vulnerable groups

In Session 2, you considered consent. This is especially important for including vulnerable groups and individuals in research. Participants need information in a format they can understand, including what the research means and what will happen to their words or images at dissemination stage. Adapting consent for vulnerable groups will depend on the capacity or age of the participants as well as acknowledging socio-economic factors.

Activity 6 Making adaptations

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Complete the matching exercise below, thinking about *what* and *who*, adding the corresponding number alongside the 'who'.

Then think about *why,* as you work through the rest of the session.

What – example of adaptation	Who – example of vulnerable participant	Add the corresponding number (1 to 5)
1. Information sheet with pictures	Participants sharing sensitive information	*Provide your answer...*
2. Observation of body language and emotional reaction	Children and families	*Provide your answer...*
3. Cartoon to explain research	Baby or child with limited capacity to withdraw	*Provide your answer...*
4. Providing a counsellor for follow-up support	Low literacy	*Provide your answer...*
5. Different versions of consent form – short and long	Children and adults with different reading skills	*Provide your answer...*

Think about how making adaptations shows respect for everyone, not just participants in vulnerable groups. Keep thinking about *why* as you read the following case study.

Answer

What – example of adaptation	Who – example of vulnerable participant
1. Information sheet with pictures	Low literacy
2. Observation of body language and emotional reaction	Baby or child with limited capacity to withdraw
3. Cartoon to explain research	Children and families
4. Providing a counsellor for follow-up support	Participants sharing sensitive information
5. Different versions of consent form – short and long	Children and adults with different reading skills

Case study 4.2 ‘To honour the stories of the girls’

Alison Buckler and Liz Chamberlain worked with the charity PLAN in Zimbabwe to understand how better to support out-of-school girls in rural areas.

The group of girls were vulnerable because of their age, gender and socio-economic status and because of their experiences of marginalisation in school or dropping out of school. This research involved community education projects and, for some, involvement in research at workshops. There were issues of safety to consider when inviting girls to the workshop and issues of respect to think through in hearing stories of loss and hope as stories emerged.

The researchers took steps in their research to ‘honour the stories of the girls’. Think about the following examples of adaptations the researchers made to show respect for this group:

- providing a workshop schedule in visual non-literate forms, respecting the interrupted schooling of the group
- checking more than once about permissions to share the stories with different audiences or only some audiences, respecting that a young person may change her mind
- providing psychosocial support with a trusted counsellor at the workshop, respecting the personal nature of the stories shared
- using some of the ambitions of the girls to create female role models in education materials.

Activity 7 Showing respect in dissemination

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Listen to the audio of Alison and Liz talking about their research.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Then think about:

- what might Liz Chamberlain have meant by ‘honouring the stories of the girls’?
- what were the possible negative consequences the researchers were hoping to avoid in their behaviours?
- what wider take away messages does this offer for a planned ethical stance to sensitive topics and vulnerable groups?

Provide your answer...

This study was included to illustrate how respect was shown for data, for participants’ voices and life stories which aimed to shift the power from the researchers towards the participants.

To find out more about the SAGE work in Zimbabwe and other international Open University education projects, see the SAGE website (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

4 Respecting relationship and power differentials

Whatever your discipline or area of interest, research with people involves identifying and taking into account differences in power. This is relevant whether you are researching people you know or don't know. Power goes beyond obvious characteristics associated with age, gender, socio-economic status and cognitive capacity and may relate to wider cultural assumptions and expectations.

In the next two activities, you will have an opportunity to reflect on situations where power differentials need to be carefully considered.

Activity 8 Research and power in the workplace

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reflect back on Case study 3.2 and imagine you are one of the leaders in the school who wanted to carry out research about assessment practices. This would involve interviewing teachers – including those you line manage – to find out more about their views.

Think about:

- whether you believe this study is justifiable
- what the teachers might be concerned about
- what you might need to discuss with the teachers to reassure them
- the advantages and disadvantages of you carrying out the interviews
- the other options you might have to meet the same research aims.

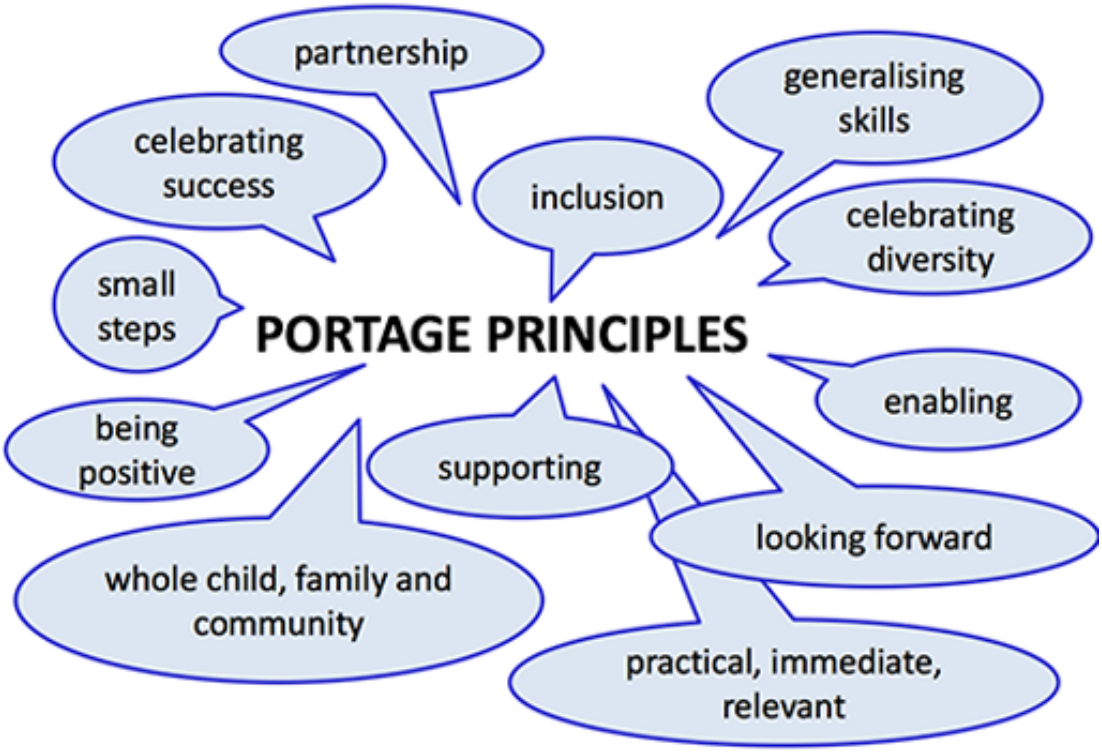


Figure 7 Portage is a practice in which visiting adults need to show respect to the families they support: those with young children with disabilities

Activity 9 Research on portage home visits

Allow approximately 5 minutes for Part A, 10 minutes for Part B and 5 minutes for Part C

Part A

To help you appreciate the kind of activities undertaken between home workers and children, watch this clip about Harry, a young child with Down's syndrome.

Video content is not available in this format.

Homeworkers and children

In the introduction to the clip, an IEP is referred to. This means an 'individual educational plan', which is an action-planning document used to target and review interventions with children needing additional support.

Reflect on whose permissions would need to be considered before this filming could have taken place in a home setting and be shared on a public website.

Part B

Now listen to Jonty Rix introducing how he became involved with this topic and his reflections on having some personal involvement as both a parent and a researcher.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Part C

For each of the following relationships Jonty, as the researcher, needed to plan for, choose two possible actions he could take to minimise the reduce the impact of power differences during his ethnographic fieldwork for each relationship.

Relationships between:

A. the researcher and the child
B. the researcher and parents
C. the researcher and home visitors
D. the parents and their child

Possible actions:

1. show that nobody is being judged or evaluated
2. plan several visits to build up trust
3. show listening skills
4. only observe or visit at agreed times and do not overstay agreed arrangements
5. give information on the benefits of the research
6. be observed to have comfortable presence with parents, increasing likelihood that you will be trusted by the child
7. stop observations/recording if you feel that tensions are high, and parents or child become upset in a way that feels private (checking afterwards that this was appropriate behaviour)
8. refer to your own experiences where relevant, of how a researcher can show their credibility and why they have the right to be conducting the research.

Answer

The following are possible answers you could have chosen; some of the actions might have been relevant for other relationships, too.

Relationships	Actions
A. the researcher and the child	6, 2
B. the researcher and parents	3, 8

C. the researcher and home visitors	1, 5
D. the parents and their child	4, 7

For further information, please see the National Portage Association website (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

5 This session’s quiz

Well done – you have reached the end of Session 4. You can now check what you’ve learned this session by taking the end-of-session quiz.

Session 4 practice quiz

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

6 Summary of Session 4

In this session you have seen how respect is an ethical issue, and you have had an opportunity to think through challenges, such as being aware of vulnerability, voice, participation and power when conducting research.

You will also have sampled some of the rich variety of social science research conducted globally, exemplified in particular in relation to childhood, education and youth settings. We hope that this course is helping you in thinking about and knowing how to behave as an ethical researcher in your own area of disciplinary interest.

A key message this session is that being an ethical researcher means adapting to situations arising and being responsive, as well as predicting issues around relationships, power and vulnerability in different contexts. As you have seen, there might be practical issues with access, participation or safety, or you might be challenged by emerging findings that could be different from what you had expected from your literature search or assumptions about the topic. Your role is to keep noticing ethical issues, to show leadership when changes need to be made and to be aware of your responsibilities after the data collection is finished.

Activity 10 Your take-aways about showing respect in research

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Review the mind map you started in Activity 2. Now that you've completed your study of this session, add any other links or examples connected with respect you think would be helpful. You might also want to share an image of your map to the course forumthread entitled 'About respect by [add name – real or avatar]'.

Note: In this forum post you may want to use an image, for advice on how to upload images to forum review our advice page.

If you have enjoyed thinking about the issues in this session, the themes of inclusion and children and young people's participation are studied in more depth on The Open University masters modules. These themes are central to modules within the Inclusive Practice pathway (EE814 and EE815) and Childhood and Youth pathway (E808 and E809) of the Masters in Education and Childhood and Youth qualifications. If you are interested in signing up for these modules, please email WELS-ECYS-Masters@open.ac.uk

You can now go to Session 5.

Session 5: Researchers behaving ethically

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 Research involves choosing between different paths

Welcome to Session 5 of *Becoming an ethical researcher*.

In this session you will explore further issues about conducting research ethically in the field, focusing on making strategic choices. Choices matter when you are faced with challenges that have serious implications. Aristotle had something to say about this in his views on how to lead a virtuous life and we begin by exploring how these key ideas remain relevant for contemporary researchers.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- identify issues associated with conducting research around working with others and dealing with change and challenges
- understand key ideas in Aristotle's philosophy relevant to becoming a virtuous researcher
- explore possible strategies for conducting ethical research in relation to fictional scenarios.

Activities

Session 5 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Watch an animation and respond to a reflective activity	5 minutes (Part A) 10 minutes (Part B) 10 minutes (Part C)
2	Choose options of preferences as a researcher from a list	10 minutes
3	Think about questions before and after reading a case study	5 minutes (Part A) 15 minutes (Part B)
4	Reflect on set of questions	5 minutes
5	Choose options as reflections on case study	10 minutes
6	Reflect on set of questions	10 minutes
7	Reflect on the options and comment on the forum	20 minutes
8	Select from the list of preferred actions as a researcher	5 minutes
9	Reflect on questions about a case study	5 minutes
10	Choose preference of options for researcher decisions	5 minutes
	Session 5 quiz	As required
11	Read a transcript and make notes	5 minutes

1 Aristotle's guidance on virtuous behaviour

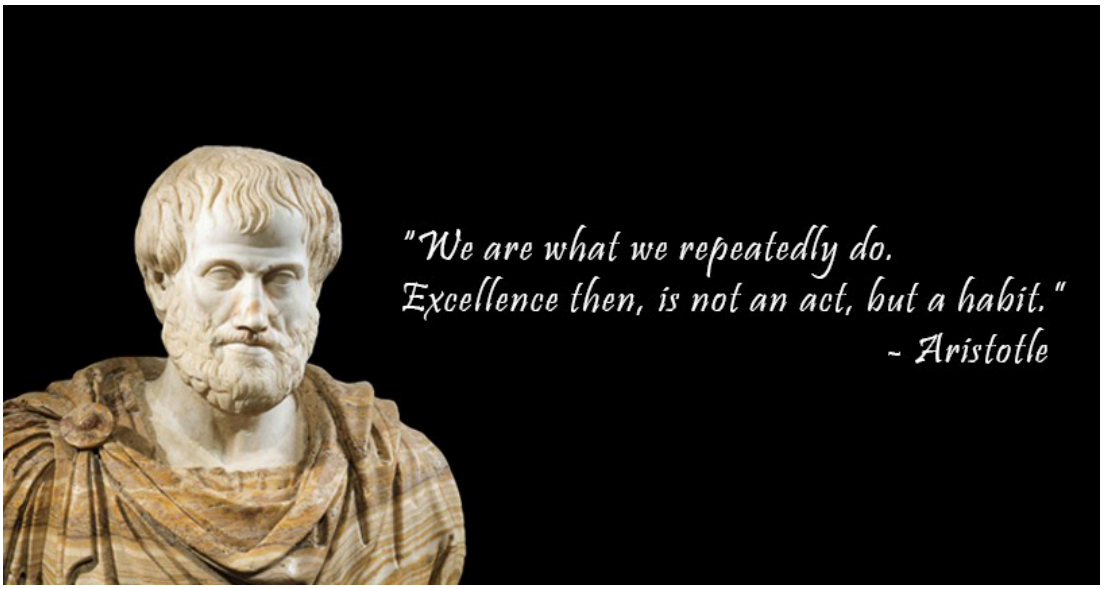


Figure 2 Gaining guidance from Aristotle

It is difficult to discuss ethics for long without coming across references to guidance by Aristotle. Now that you have met a number of contemporary researchers and considered ethical choices in imaginary scenarios, this is a good time to highlight the relevance of Aristotle's thinking to contemporary researchers.

It is important to note that this is just one viewpoint of many about what constitutes a virtuous way to behave. Virtue Ethics is a global field which includes 'ways of being' embedded in cultures underpinned for example in the East as part of Confucian philosophy (Smith, n.d.) or across Africa in the notion of 'ubuntu' or 'humanity to others' (Marshall, 2023). We can learn much from these other views of the world. For example, ubuntu as a basis for living in society takes an ecological view of humans' role in our environment, placing non-humans as central to considerations guiding behaviours (Etieyibo, 2017). This viewpoint reminds us to pay such relationships close attention as we work towards environmental sustainability in our lives. By signing up to the UK's Concordat for Environmental Sustainability in Research and Innovation (EAUC, n.d.), the Open University is committing to maximising benefits and minimising negative impacts on the environment through our research.

Aristotle's views on living a good life through finding a path between extremes, something he referred to as the Doctrine of the Mean (or the middle way) have been interpreted by MacFarlane (2009, 2010) as guidance for researchers in contemporary times. In the first activity, you will watch an animation to find out how virtues such as courage and sincerity should form part of a virtuous approach to research.

Activity 1 Identifying vices and virtues

Allow approximately 5 minutes for Part A, 10 minutes for Part B and 10 minutes for Part C

Part A

Watch the animation for an overview of virtues and vices in relation to six stages of research.

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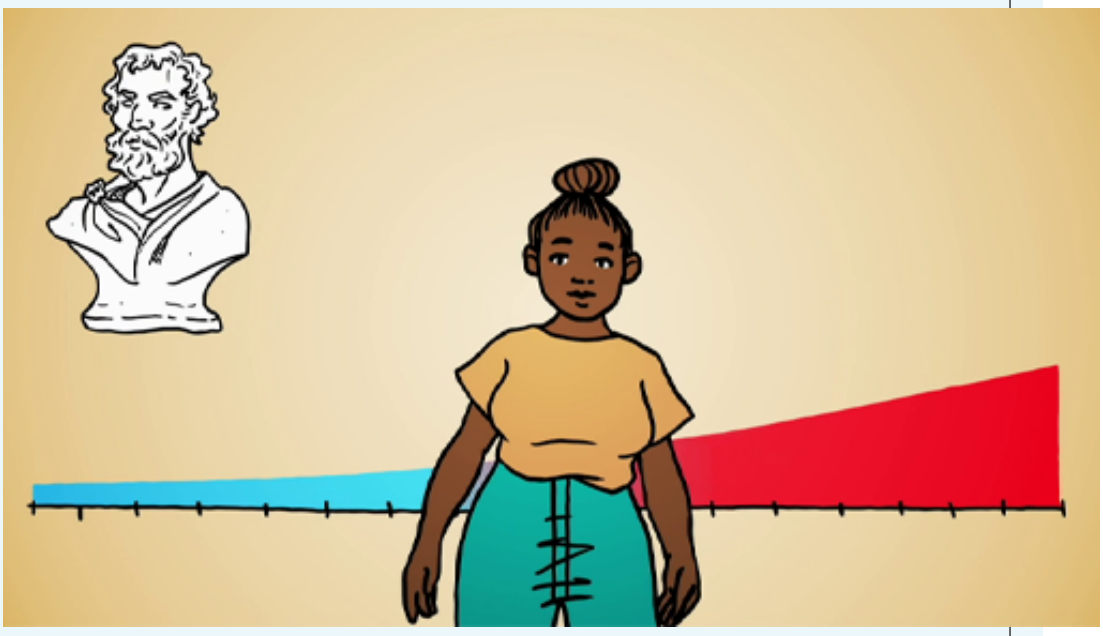

Virtues and vices animation

Now sort these six stages of research into the correct order and place each one in the column on the left:

Provide your answer...	Disseminating – through publication or performance
Provide your answer...	Generating – collecting data, ideas
Provide your answer...	Creating – related to results, interpretations, critiques and models or theoretical insights
Provide your answer...	Negotiating – gaining access, permissions, consent and support
Provide your answer...	Framing – setting questions or hypotheses
Provide your answer...	Reflecting – on personal learning about the process of research

Answer

Framing – setting questions or hypotheses
Negotiating – gaining access, permissions, consent and support

Generating – collecting data, ideas

Creating – related to results, interpretations, critiques and models or theoretical insights

Disseminating – through publication or performance

Reflecting – on personal learning about the process of research

You might have found it hardest to place 'Reflecting' in order, because an ethical researcher should be reflecting throughout the research process.

Part B

Watch the animation in Part A again.

Then look at the lists below, of research activities related to the negotiating and creating phases of research.

Indicate whether you think the behaviour could represent an ethical virtue or unethical vice depending on the context. In each case the researcher has a choice.

Negotiating

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Creating

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

You might have found it difficult to make a judgment. For example, for the negotiating activity, you might have found it most difficult to decide about the use of financial incentives. It is sometimes defensible to use incentives. Consider the following guidance from the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines for educational research:

> Researchers' use of incentives to encourage participation should be commensurate with good sense, such that the level of incentive does not impinge on the free decision to participate. The use of incentives should be acknowledged in any reporting of the research.
>
> (BERA, 2024, p. 20)

You will have a chance to think about this issue further in Activity 3 in relation to a particular research project.

It is not always straightforward to judge whether a behaviour or action is virtuous or would be considered a vice; a researcher needs to remain open to a range of actions and commit to being reflective about their merits in the specific context of the research they are leading.

Part C

Write notes on the following:

- Which of Aristotle’s concepts of virtues and vices most add to your understanding of becoming an ethical researcher?

Provide your answer...

- Is there anything that puzzles you?

Provide your answer...

In the next section, you will look at how accountability to others matters in teamwork, and you will return to virtues and vices at the end of this session.

2 Fieldwork – alone or with partners and co-researchers?

Figure 3 Research involves and affects others even when carrying out research as a sole researcher

A researcher is not a solitary lighthouse keeper. When grappling with difficult decisions and complex data, rather than feeling ‘at sea’, you are likely to benefit from the fresh perspectives offered by others. This fits in with trying to think through your project from the many perspectives of those likely to be involved or affected.

Most of us will be involved in working in teams or communities at some stage in our professional or study lives. You might find such teamwork to be a source of inspiration, a constraint or perhaps a bit of both.

Whether a sole or team researcher, your conduct and decisions impact on others. All the researchers you have met so far have worked with partners and peers at some stage. In this section you will consider the opportunities and challenges this brings.

Activity 2 Comparing solo with team researching

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Consider the following activities you might find yourself engaged in as a researcher. Think about the advantages and disadvantages of working alone or with a partner/ co-researcher as part of a team for each activity. Decide whether you would prefer to be in a team or working alone in each situation, and make a note of your thoughts. It might be helpful to have a real or imaginary research project and context in mind.

Research activity	Solo	Team

Interviewing close colleagues inside your own organisation	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Deciding what to include and what to leave out of a survey	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Making arrangements for field work in more than one site over a wide geographical area using a travel budget	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Stopping field work when participants become upset and seek a debriefing	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Making observational notes in a group setting	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Using an unfamiliar software package for analysing data	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Conducting field work where the language and culture is new to you	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Coding and grouping of data for analysis	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Responding to a senior person who wants to influence your research for a different agenda	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Establishing trust in research relationships before collecting data on sensitive topics	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Interrupting field work when the situation becomes physically or psychologically unsafe	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Finding out something unexpected and exciting in your data	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Identifying a concerning safeguarding issue during field work	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Designing a poster to disseminate your emerging findings	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
Making a presentation about your research	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Discussion

You might have had a clear preference for some of the activities, depending on your imagined or real research context. For example, when creating new knowledge by interviewing colleagues, then as an insider you might prefer to introduce a new member of the team to avoid bias or to interview alone because colleagues trust you. If you are interviewing someone in a new context or in a language in which you are not sufficiently fluent, you will clearly need some element of teamwork for access and translation.

At the dissemination stage, a team of researchers might benefit from sharing out tasks and learning from others' strengths as well as their viewpoints, even though this may involve additional time and potential compromise.

Research is never a truly solo enterprise due to the accountabilities at every stage. Be attentive to power imbalances between yourself and others. Sometimes you could hold power and influence over others about which you need to be mindful and mitigate against. In other cases, those with whom you wish to work may hold power over you and/or those you wish to approach and involve. Consider the influences they might have and how they might impact your research decisions and the way you build relationships with potential participants.

When working in partnership it is important to be clear about each researcher's role and to acknowledge each person's contribution accurately. Consider early how you are going to acknowledge other researchers in the dissemination. Conversely, if you are asked to participate in collaborative research, check what your role will be and how your contribution will be recognised.

It might be useful to refer to the Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT) framework of 14 roles in research, which can be used to agree the recognition of contributions. The following roles, all of which may not be relevant to a particular project, listed alphabetically are:

Conceptualization
Data curation
Formal analysis
Funding acquisition
Investigation
Methodology
Project administration
Software
Resources
Supervision

Validation
Visualization
Writing – original draft
Writing – review & editing

(CRT, 2015)

These are important issues to be open and honest about in order to work collaboratively in research.

2.1 Children and young people as research partners

Figure 4 Considering children in plans to collaborate in research

Research teams and partners need not only consist of colleagues and peers. Participatory research is one methodology that involves you working alongside your participants. Participatory research provides the opportunity to investigate a topic with those who have lived experience of it – an 'insider' view. We need to ensure we do not overprivilege the views of a small group of co-researchers by generalising findings to conclude all people like our co-researchers will share their same views and beliefs. However, participatory research can expand a researcher's awareness and understanding of a topic, and the range of possible issues, by engaging with those who have first-hand experience of it.

The engagement of children in collaborative roles with the researcher is an excellent example of participatory research, and many of the potential benefits, challenges and issues which arise apply to other population groups. Giving children and young people a voice is part of global initiatives to improve children's lives. As referred to in Session 2, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out the principles of child rights and the need to afford them dignity. The following is a direct quotation from the Convention:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 13

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. (United Nations, 1989)

In Session 4, you looked at different levels of involvement of child research participants, from very little or token representation through to full participation. The Open University's Our Voices website provides extensive guidance and support to adult and child researchers and research participants about ways of working in a range of collaborative research roles.

Alderson and Morrow (2020) write about ethical considerations when engaging in research with children. This includes acknowledging differences of power and differences in resources. This might affect how you invite a child into a participative research project – what you might say to them, promise them, ask them and how you might behave with them. These considerations relate to the ideas of virtues and vices at the start of this session and, in particular, the importance of sincerity and humility.

Before you read the following case study about an international, longitudinal research project tracking children living in poverty, complete Part A of Activity 3 and then use Part B to reflect on the ethical issues the case study raises.

Activity 3 Using financial incentives in participatory research

Allow approximately 5 minutes for Part A

Part A

Before you read Case study 5.1, refer back to Activity 1 and decide on your view about the use of payment to research participants:

- Would you pay a research participant? Why or why not?
- Do you have any experience of paying for participation or being paid as a participant? If so, how did this make you feel?
- Is it ethical or could it be ethical in some circumstances?

Case study 5.1 Financial incentives in participatory research: Young Lives

Based in Oxford, UK, Young Lives undertook research on child poverty with 12,000 children over 15 years in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam (2002–17).

The research team in each country approached payment in ways that reflected cultural contexts about the value of people's time, their willingness to help with research 'for the common good', their poverty and not having to miss a day's wages to spend time talking to researchers. Norms of reciprocity and community and/or expectations of needing to obey the government affected people's participation, and

payments were offered to compensate for their contributions and the imposition on them.

In Ethiopia, children were encouraged to use the money they received for participating in the research to buy school materials. Families living in extreme poverty at first perceived Young Lives as an aid agency giving out practical help and money. Later, researchers were careful to explain that the research 'project' does not provide any aid to communities or individuals (Tafere et al., 2009).

In Peru, researchers gave small gifts to participants as a 'thank you', as well as some supplies to local schools.

In India, research teams also provided some resources to schools, as requested by local community leaders, to benefit all the local children and, up to 2009, they did not directly pay the participants. However, some participants thought it was unfair that that they did not receive payment for their time when it was given to benefit everyone in the community (Morrow, 2009).

Source of case study: The Ethics of Research with Young People, Anderson & Morrow (2020) adapted from pp 76/77

The ethical dilemma relating to remuneration

The ethical dilemma around offering any sort of remuneration (whether cash payments, cash in kind or gifts) to potential participants and/or their organisation/group predominantly rests upon the potential for remuneration to influence people's participation and responses. On the one hand, some may participate when they would not otherwise wish to do so. Remuneration might also influence participants' responses, e.g. wishing to respond in a way that is pleasing to those making payments/gifts. Set against this, remuneration might be necessary to recompense those who could not otherwise take time away from paid work to take part, particularly in the poorest of communities, where researchers may particularly wish to conduct research to support those people. Balancing these considerations is complex and highly contextualised.

Activity 3 Using financial incentives in participatory research *continued*

Allow approximately 15 minutes for Part B

Part B

Choose one or more prompts to reflect on and, if you wish, share a short post with your response on the course forum.

- After reading the Young Lives case study, have you changed your mind about the ethics of payment? Why might this be beneficial?
- Why might payment for participation of vulnerable children be misinterpreted?
- How should researchers anticipate and compensate for differences in power when working with young people?
- How can understanding intercultural views on reciprocity support ethical practice?

Consider how the researchers revised their strategies in response to the challenge that arose. The researchers felt their study about poverty might be making the participants poorer. As a result, they reframed the payment as an opportunity to recompense the cost of time lost and as payment in kind, which resolved their ethical dilemma about paying for participation.

Visit the Young Lives website (open the link in a new tab/window) to find out more about their work, including publications, research films and their approach to ethics.

2.2 Children's voice and children's rights

Enabling children to have a voice is underpinned by a rights perspective. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was agreed in 1989 and came into force in the UK in 1992.

Figure 5 Like everyone, children have rights to freedom of expression

Activity 4 Children's Expression

Allow approximately 5 minutes

In this activity you are asked to reflect on the relevance of children's rights and participation in research in relation to your research interests. Think about:

- How might realisation of children's rights and the ethical issues around participation apply to any of your future plans to engage with children and young people in a research project?
- How children's voices have been incorporated in research with reference to your reading about researchers, including child researchers, on this course?
- Other groups of people to whom these rights apply. How might the rights held by other people affect how a researcher thinks about including children's rights in research?

To find out more about examples of children participating in research, visit The Open University's Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

Children's Research Centre website (make sure to open this link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page).

To read more about children's rights and ways of empowering children to participate in and even lead research, visit the Our Voices Resources page.

3 Working with sponsors

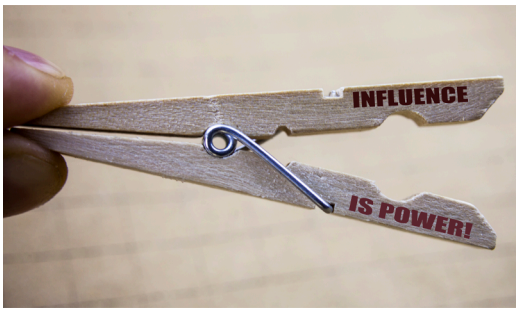

Figure 6 Sponsors have influences on research: What are the limits to their power?

Different research designs raise different ethical issues in practice, including: who participates and benefits? Who shall we include and who shall we leave out? Who pays for the research?

When you imagine yourself doing research, do you think of yourself collecting data in person with people, reading documents, observing in a setting or conducting research remotely? Your choice of design and methods should be decided only after you have determined the focus of your research and established a research question or hypothesis to test. This will drive which kinds of data are needed to address the question or provide the evidence to test the hypothesis.

In this section you will have the chance to consider the ethics of one particular quantitative design: the use of randomised controlled trials (RCTs).

> A randomized controlled trial (RCT) is a type of experiment where participants are randomly allocated, either to a group who receive some form of intervention or treatment, or to a control group who don't. Use of RCTs is a central feature of the evidence-based movement currently highly influential in many fields of social research.
>
> (Robson, 2011, p. 90)

Imagine how reassured you'd be as a patient to know a new treatment such as a vaccine or drug had been properly trialled in a way designed to minimise risk to you. Advocates for RCTs being used in educational settings (Torgerson and Torgerson, 2001) view them as a way to avoid policies, curriculum and practice-focused interventions that might be ineffective, and as a way of offering evidence-based decision-making. Advocates see knowledge as underpinned by rigorous research.

Although there are many overlaps between health and education, the two settings are very different environments for research. It is much more complex to set up true controls in education settings, to administer 'dosage' or eliminate bias. This challenges the claims which can be made for findings. Additionally, RCTs raise ethical questions of equity, since a group might not benefit or have their education impeded.

Read this case study asking you to imagine yourself participating in an RCT in England. It's been selected to help you focus on who receives benefits from research as an ethical issue.

Case study 5.2 Participating in randomised control trials

Imagine you are a learning assistant in a secondary/primary school interested in innovation and education research. Your school has been selected to take part in a

randomised control trial of an innovative intervention on assessment. Thanks to generous funding of the trial, members of staff will be trained in what are believed to be the most effective ways to provide formative assessment and pupils' results.

It seems to be good news that this trial is linked to well-known international research on formative assessment with extensive literature seeming to show promising results. You will remember your own schooling and being totally confused by teachers' comments in red pen marks, such as '4 out of 10'. It was never clear what exactly you had to do to improve. As a learning assistant, you have observed differences in the ways in which teachers give feedback, and it sounds as if your school is fortunate to have been selected.

You attend the training, start using some of the new practices with your learners and you help report the exam data needed. Over a one-year period, you begin to see changes in teachers' practices from those who had attended training, and the ongoing feedback is positive about the effect on the classroom. However, some members of staff begin to raise ethical objections.

As this is an RCT, the funders insist on comparative quantitative data and a control group. Staff say it is unethical to teach one group of learners with a method that seems to be successful and at the same time deliberately deprive others of this. They also say it is impossible for those who attended training not to share the good ideas with colleagues. Finally, they also do not want to have to meet additional assessment burdens just to generate data needed for the evaluation. During a staff meeting, the senior leaders of the school make suggestions for a way to proceed and ask staff to offer their views.

Activity 5 Issues with RCTs

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Review Case study 5.2 and decide between the options offered below. Choose two options in each case.

Q1. Two key objections of staff to the RCT control group design are:

- ☐ It benefits some pupils but not others
- ☐ It is too expensive to put into practice
- ☐ It is too time-consuming to use the new method of assessment
- ☐ They want to share good practice, not withhold it
- ☐ Learning assistants don't have the same power as teachers

Q2. Two justifiable suggestions for resolving the objections could be:

- ☐ The school withdraws from this funded study partway through
- ☐ The school agrees to continue to provide data to the funder without raising staff reservations
- ☐ The school offers the trial assessment data from assessments already planned rather than specially designed
- ☐ The school provides alternative comparative data from a group of equivalent age and attainment children from a previous year taught by the same teacher instead of from a current control group

- ☐ The funder demands that the school continue on the basis originally agreed without entering into consultation

Discussion

The first option ('The school withdraws from this funded study partway through') could also be justifiable if the school have signed a consent form which allows withdrawal during the study.

This activity might have helped you imagine how sponsors can place pressure on researchers through imbalances of power, and the implications of this for implicit as well as explicit expectations on researchers.

3.1 Researcher wellbeing

Pressures on researchers can come from different sources. Read the following case study, which is extracted from the BERA Research Ethics Case Study 2: Researcher Wellbeing and International Fieldwork, to consider some of the pressures a researcher can come under and how they might deal with these.

Case study 5.3 Early career researchers

'Sonya has been appointed to her first academic role since completing her doctorate: a 12-month post working as a research fellow at a research-intensive university on a comparative study of rural schools across Europe. The project team is large and dispersed, including research fellows based at three other universities. Each has responsibility for fieldwork in a particular country, and Sonya will be visiting schools in Spain. The principal investigator (PI) overseeing Sonya's work is a professor of sociology who is also overseeing a number of other large projects.' (Pennacchia, 2019, p. 1)

The PI places Sonya with a local family in rural Spain and puts her in contact with the headteachers of two schools she will visit.

'Sonya is a native English-speaker but can speak intermediate Spanish; staying with the family is intended to support her language development for future project visits and the presentation of research findings (73). The PI asks Sonya to document her observations and interactions with the local community in order to build up a better understanding of the educational and wider social context of the community.' (Pennacchia, 2019, p. 2)

As the fieldwork visit progresses a number of issues arise, including difficulties in getting to the schools and meeting the expectations of her hosts to embrace their hospitality and social engagements in the evenings and weekend.

'Sonya finds fulfilling her PI's request to compile fieldnotes about the community, which she can only do at the end of each very long day, increasingly burdensome. Sonya does not fully understand the purpose of this part of the study – it is not detailed in the original job description or research bid. However, she notes that it is relevant to another of the PI's projects, which is about rural community life in Spain.' (Pennacchia, 2019, p. 3)

Activity 6 Pressures can affect researcher wellbeing

Allow approximately 10 minutes

After reading Case study 5.3 consider your responses to the following questions.

Think about:

- What issues might there be for Sonya's wellbeing from this field work arrangement?
- What could the principal investigator (PI) have done to prepare Sonya ahead of her first phase of field work?
- Why might Sonya have worried about asking her PI why she was gathering the additional data on the local community as part of this project?

Provide your answer...

In the next section, you will continue to consider wellbeing and other challenges of field work.

4 Dealing with choices, changes and challenge during research

Figure 7 A research journey is unlikely to be a straightforward one

Hold on tight, because there will be bumps in the road!

In practice you will need to make choices as researcher, however well you have planned your research. Accepting that there are choices for you to help deal with unexpected challenges provides you with opportunities to show flexibility and resilience in progressing your research. Whether these are minor or major challenges, you will still have to maintain your research relationships with respect and sincerity and ensure your research is valid and transparent.

4.1 Internal changes

In the next case study, you will reflect on the way the COVID-19 pandemic affected a study, but let's start with less dramatic challenges. Minor hiccups may be small-scale at the micro or meso level yet still inconvenient to a researcher, such as:

- a low response rate
- participants withdrawing due to sickness
- wishing you could reword your interview questions as respondents are not offering the kind of data you anticipated
- finding you cannot record a session due to technical issues
- being unsure how to code data which does not seem to fit in with the rest
- coming across attitudes that make you uncomfortable and challenge your expectations.

If such minor challenges to your research occur, you might be able to adjust plans using such things as extra time or advice from others in the research team or a supervisor/tutor. You may need to reflect on your planning, ethical considerations and the integrity of your research as you find a solution that may enable you to continue.

4.2 External changes

On the other hand, major external changes could disrupt your ability to continue. Imagine:

- funding is withdrawn
- a partner organisation has leadership or financial issues
- a national policy changes
- a fellow researcher is arrested
- geopolitical events make a situation risky.

You may have no choice but to make dramatic changes to your plans, including cancelling, postponing or reframing your research work, in order to prioritise safety and to show integrity to your research.

Figure 8 Some activities were banned during the pandemic

Read the following fictionalised case study about a researcher's plans and complete Activity 7.

Case study 5.4 A study affected by COVID-19

Imagine you are an early years' leader with five staff running a well-regarded nursery. You have read studies about outdoor play from around the world and found it stimulating and challenging. You have planned a small-scale observational research study about children's outdoor play in your setting. You have received permission from governors to conduct the study, which they see as offering benefits to the children and future plans. You have received consent forms from the parents of the children you would like to observe.

You thought you had planned for every eventuality, but when COVID-19 affects your region, this risks everyone's health. The government announce that your nursery and all other settings for children in your region should close. Along with your five staff, your work changes to remote home liaison with families by email, phone and video call. A few families drop out of contact. Some staff can no longer work full-time because of caring responsibilities at home, some staff are off work unwell, and everyone reports stress at adjusting to the COVID-19 lockdown situation.

Activity 7 COVID-19: Rearrange? Reframe? Postpone? Forum activity

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Think about the following three questions:

1. How can you adjust your research study in response to this challenge?

From week to week you do not know when the nursery will reopen. You are aware that you only have a few months to study play at this particular developmental stage. When you are given the all clear to reopen the nursery, your first concern is for safety. You follow the national and local guidelines and make changes to the environment. Children will attend at parental discretion and be grouped in mixed age groups of six children, with staggered play times and adults supervising. Much of the outdoor play equipment is removed and the environment looks very different.

2. What are your options for rearranging, reframing or postponing the study?

For example, you might decide to interview parents or workers or give children cameras to capture play.

3. How will you check any changes to your research design are ethical and maintain the validity of the study?

Taking the scenario in Case study 5.4, list your ideas for rearranging, reframing or postponing this research study. Include ideas about how each change impacts on others, and the ethical considerations.

Share a short post on the course forum with your key thoughts about what you would do as a researcher in this situation and how you would explain your decisions.

Only this post will count towards your digital badge. However, to help the discussion along, respond to another post on the course forum in a respectful way.

4.3 Researcher safety and wellbeing

Figure 9 Wellbeing and safety often involve others and weighing up different factors

You have already reflected on how ethics involves a balance of risk and benefits. As well as responsibilities to participants, researchers also have to balance their own safety and that of those in their team. The risks considered may be physical or psychological.

In general, the risk should not be greater than would be expected in everyday circumstances. Ethics committees will want to be satisfied that there are contingency plans for sensitive topics. In the case of COVID-19, given the risk to public health, researchers will also need to rethink whether face-to-face work is necessary. Researchers need to be alert for each other's wellbeing, whereabouts and safety, and team support can help fellow researchers to demonstrate resilience and self-care.

Activity 8 Resilience and safety is everyone's responsibility

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Building on your awareness of BERA ethical guidelines introduced in previous sessions, now look in detail at the section on safeguarding and answer the prompts underneath:

> 82. Safeguarding the physical and psychological wellbeing of researchers is part of the ethical responsibility of employing institutions and sponsors, as well as of researchers themselves. Safety can be a particular concern in certain circumstances, for example when fieldwork is undertaken in situations that are potentially risky. Researchers should be aware of the legal responsibilities as well as the moral duty of institutions towards the safety of staff and students. Institutions, sponsors and independent researchers should consider whether an in-depth risk assessment form and ongoing monitoring of researcher safety is advisable, especially for those undertaking fieldwork, working in certain jurisdictions and/or investigating sensitive issues; this may be required by employers and sponsors. Principal investigators, other researchers, students undertaking research and their supervisors should ideally be offered training on researcher safety. Specialist training should be made available to researchers entering conflict or post-conflict settings internationally, or areas with high risk levels of infection or other risks.
>
> (BERA, 2024, pp. 33)

Identify a research topic and context you are interested in.

Think about:

- Which of the following suggestions could support researcher safety and wellbeing in that context?

Insert an X in the box alongside all those that might apply to you.

	Suggested actions	Insert X
1.	Conducting research online if possible	*Provide your answer...*
2.	Avoiding working alone where possible	*Provide your answer...*
3.	Avoiding taking expensive recording equipment to the field	*Provide your answer...*
4.	Conducting risk assessments or safety training in advance	*Provide your answer...*
5.	Carrying out a literature review as an alternative	*Provide your answer...*
6.	Setting up a person or service for emotional support and debriefing	*Provide your answer...*

7.	Avoiding all research on sensitive or political topics	*Provide your answer...*
8.	Working with partners and gatekeepers who have local knowledge	*Provide your answer...*
9.	Having a working mobile phone and key contacts	*Provide your answer...*
10.	Reporting to those who have responsibility for you if you are unwell	*Provide your answer...*

Discussion

There are no ‘right’ answers to this section as they will depend on the research circumstances you were imagining, but they should help you consider options for researcher safety in your future research.

4.4 An extreme case of research affecting safety

To close this section, you will read and reflect on a true case study about a researcher who faced an extreme situation in the United Arab Emirates.

Case study 5.5 Matthew Hedges

You might have been aware of news items in 2018 about Matthew Hedges. The news media reported how he was a doctoral student at the University of Durham, UK, researching in international affairs and military policy in the Middle East. Following the Arab Spring, he was interested in civil military relations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Alongside his studies he was also a consultant and a cyber intelligence analyst. He had lived in the United Arab Emirates at different times over the previous decades and had senior level contacts.

Matthew was a few months away from finishing his research when he was arrested, his laptop seized, and he was imprisoned for spying. He maintained his innocence but, while being retained in the UEA, signed a confession. After six months of campaigning by his wife and the British government, he was released after diplomatic intervention on a pardon.

Although extreme, this case study is a true example of researcher vulnerability due to external circumstances. It raises issues of duty of care by the university, prior risk assessment, awareness of political sensitivity and academic freedom of expression.

Activity 9 Reflecting on a researcher's situation

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Think about:

- What questions would you like to ask Matthew Hedges about his resilience and safety?
- What questions would you like to ask the university about the support they were able to give to Matthew Hedges before, during and after his experiences?
- What does this case study show about risk assessment and academic freedom in different parts of the world?

Provide your answer...

If you would like to read more about the Matthew Hedges case, see any of the following sources:

Matthew Hedges: Who is the man at the centre of the spy row?

Matthew Hedges: Academic jailed in UAE for spying 'failed' by UK government

Matthew Hedges: Academic 'psychologically tortured' in UAE jail

Matthew Hedges affair should be a wake-up call for universities

5 Choices, resilience and respect in practice

Figure 10 Returning to think about how being virtuous involves making active choices about what not to do

Part of applying principles in practice and making ethical choices means being resilient. For example, researchers often see adapting to challenges as a way to learn and reflect on their earlier assumptions that can help them to make changes for the better. Sharing and writing up reflections on unexpected events in a transparent way can be helpful for other researchers and also demonstrates honesty and sincerity. By dealing with changes as well as they can, researchers also build up resilience and maintain respect.

Although some of the examples in this session have included choices faced in extreme situations of pandemic and arrest, hopefully any unexpected research changes you encounter will be far more manageable.

Activity 10 Making a choice

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read some summaries of stories shared by Open University researchers of choices they made whilst conducting research. Decide which choice you think the researcher made based on becoming an ethical researcher.

Think about the choices the researchers took and how they decided what was the best approach to show respect and integrity in their particular context.

Researcher situation:	Researcher choice:	A or B?
1. Kieron's research in Indonesia involved filming in classrooms. On one occasion, some children whose parents had not given permission for them to be filmed were accidentally included in the recording	A. Delete the footage with children where there was no permission B. Continue filming for data collection but don't show the footage to anyone	*Provide your answer...*
2. Liz and Alison's research workshop in Zimbabwe had age guidance. A young woman with profound disabilities arrived with her	A. Include the young woman (not send home with book) B. Regrettably send the young woman home with a book about the project	*Provide your answer...*

carer, who was outside the age range expected		
3. Kieron wanted to find out attitudes to teaching disabled children. How could he approach such a sensitive subject?	A. Interview a senior government official with many years' experience B. Design a carefully worded questionnaire with quantitative analysis	*Provide your answer...*
4. Liz and Alison and partners led a workshop exploring emotive themes of personal turning points. The young women made films. Who should decide who would see the films?	A. The funders select the best stories to illustrate the research themes as a powerful means of dissemination B. The young women choose whether or not to share their films and which audiences view them, and have the right to change their minds	*Provide your answer...*

Answer

Situation 1 – A. Delete the footage with children where there was no permission.

Situation 2 – B. Regrettably send the young woman home with a book about the project.

Situation 3 – B. Design a carefully worded questionnaire with quantitative analysis.

Situation 4 – B. The young women choose whether or not to share their films and which audiences view them, and have the right to change their minds.

6 This session’s quiz

Well done – you have reached the end of Session 5. You can now check what you’ve learned this session by taking the end-of-session quiz.

Session 5 practice quiz

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

7 Summary of Session 5

Remaining ethical during research

Conducting field work, whether in person or remotely, is likely to present unexpected challenges. In this session you have worked through some dilemmas and thought about the ethical impact of changes and why those changes matter.

Your interests and the contexts and research designs presented here – from participatory work with children and randomised controlled trials to adapting to a global crisis – are very different. You have also thought about teamwork and why research always impacts others, as well as why it is ethical to consider safety, wellbeing and resilience.

The section started with Aristotle's ideas about virtues and vices, and this is a concept you can now revisit.

Activity 11 Advice

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Earlier, you met Alison Buckler and Liz Chamberlain introducing their work in Zimbabwe with the SAGE project. Alison was happy to provide some advice on ethics for new researchers.

Read the following short transcript and highlight any take-away learning points.

> **Researcher reflective discussion**
>
> DEBORAH: And Alison, can I ask you, what advice do you have about research and about ethics for other perhaps new researchers?
>
> ALISON: I think the first thing is that ethical issues will continue to arise and surprise you throughout the whole research process. And then I think when you're a new researcher and you have this sort of checklist of things you have to do and one of those is to apply for your ethical approval. And you do that, and you get a signature and then you can go off and do your field work. And sometimes it's easy and kind of tempting to just put that in a folder and think, right, that's done. Now I can get on with my data generation.
>
> And I think that it's really important to remember that that is a living process, a living document. And things will come up that surprise you and you have to deal with. And you need to be aware of that and open to them. And not just in a kind of problem-solving way, although that's really important too, and thinking about how they affect your participants. But also, as Liz said, you know, be open to learning from things that can seem quite catastrophic at times in the research, and be open to dealing with them as best you can in the field. And then thinking about how you can learn from them and how they can actually improve your research and how you can write about them. And how you can think about your research in a different way.
>
> So I guess one piece of advice would be to remember that ethics is not a, you know, something that happens at the beginning. It's an ongoing thing throughout the research.

You can now go to Session 6.

Session 6: Ethically ending and exiting research

Introduction and aims

Figure 1 How should researchers be remembered as they complete their research? Research involves choosing between different paths

Welcome to Session 6 of *Becoming an ethical researcher*.

In this final session, you will think about the issues associated with completing a research project. This will involve thinking back to the multiple perceptions and expectations of a researcher that you have read about. It also involves remembering how the researcher needs to continue showing respect to all of those involved with, and affected by, the research, which must continue beyond the project itself. For example, the researcher who leaves a setting into which other researchers with their proposals are likely to be welcomed is showing respect and integrity, both to those in the setting and those in the wider research community. To do this, the researcher must ensure that all expectations are met, positive and trusting relationships have been built and recognise that once a project's findings are published and disseminated, they will continue to have impact.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- understand the implications of showing sustained integrity as a researcher, including showing respect and continuing to meet researcher obligations
- appreciate how reporting and disseminating research are ethical responsibilities
- examine issues associated with exiting research (including legacy, relationships and sustainability).

Activities

Session 6 activity planner

Activity	Details	Time
1	Activity on identifying vices Activity on identifying pressures	5 minutes (Part A) 10 minutes (Part B)
2	Think about research scenarios	10 minutes
3	Contribute to a discussion forum about an issue raised by a research scenario	20 minutes
4	Choose from different forms of dissemination	10 minutes
5	Review websites for how they aim to increase scale of dissemination	15 minutes
6	Watch a video and reflect on questions Think of ideas for research	15 minutes (Part A) 5 minutes (Part B)
7	Watch a video and reflect on questions	10 minutes
8	Match the virtues or vices to research statements	5 minutes
9	Review a responsibilities checklist and add ideas	5 minutes
	Session 6 quiz	As required
10	Summarise top tips for the ethical (and virtuous) researcher	10 minutes

1 What could go wrong after research?

Figure 2 There are certainly hazards to avoid in research

Session 5 introduced a framework for thinking about virtuous ethical research behaviour, and also highlighted some of the vices researchers might be tempted to show. Most researchers do not choose to be unethical and, if they do succumb to these vices, the reasons can usually be explained by responses to the many pressures and accountabilities to which researchers are obligated.

Activity 1 Avoiding temptation

Allow approximately 5 minutes for Part A and 10 minutes for Part B

Part A

Match the following real scenarios to the vices, which the researchers were accused of not managing to avoid. This will relate to both what they did or, in some cases, did not do.

Choose one or two of the vices which might be associated with each of the seven scenarios and write (or paste) them in the adjoining boxes. It doesn't matter which order the vices are listed in in the columns.

- Recklessness
- Partiality
- Laziness
- Concealment
- Exaggeration
- Boastfulness

Number	Scenario	Vice 1	Vice 2
1	Alice Goffman was accused of abetting criminal behaviour by not reporting criminal behaviour she observed when she became part of a community in a deprived area of the United States (Lubet, 2015).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
2	Matthew Hedges was accused of being a spy when his doctoral research involved asking questions about power in policy decision-making in the United Arab Emirates (Parveen and Wintour, 2018).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
3	Natasha Whiteman initially carried out her doctoral research in an online fan forum without asking permission but, when the site crashed, she revealed she had archived material to share and those on the site were very unhappy to hear this (Whiteman, 2012).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
4	Dr Andrew Wakefield had his research, which caused alarm about possible effects of the mumps, measles and rubella vaccinations, discredited as a result of being	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

	found to have falsified results (Boseley, 2018).		
5	Marks Chabedi had his doctorate taken away after being accused of plagiarism and copying his thesis from another doctorate researcher (Infomory, 2013).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
6	In his book *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre accuses those involved with promoting fish oils in schools to increase pupil performance as being based on flimsy evidence (Goldacre, 2009).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
7	'Polar research can contribute to the spreading of invasive species in many ways. Research vessels can transport invasive species by discharging ballast water into polar oceans. Research aircraft can carry invasive small mammals and seeds. Individual researchers can carry seeds within their clothing and luggage (Hughes et al., 2020).' (Elshout et al., 2023, p.16).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Discussion

Number	Scenario	Vice 1	Vice 2

1	Alice Goffman was accused of abetting criminal behaviour by not reporting criminal behaviour she observed when she became part of a community in a deprived area of the United States (Lubet, 2015).	Partiality	Concealment
2	Matthew Hedges was accused of being a spy when his doctoral research involved asking questions about power in policy decision-making in the United Arab Emirates (Parveen and Wintour, 2018).	Recklessness	
3	Natasha Whiteman initially carried out her doctoral research in an online fan forum without asking permission but, when the site crashed, she revealed she had archived material to share and those on the site were very unhappy to hear this (Whiteman, 2012).	Concealment	
4	Dr Andrew Wakefield had his research, which caused alarm about possible effects of the mumps, measles and rubella vaccinations, discredited as a result of being found to have falsified results (Boseley, 2018).	Laziness	Concealment
5	Marks Chabedi had his doctorate taken away after being accused of plagiarism and copying his thesis from another doctorate researcher (Infomory, 2013).	Laziness	Boastfulness
6	In his book *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre accuses those involved with promoting fish oils in schools to increase pupil performance as being based on flimsy evidence (Goldacre, 2009).	Boastfulness	Exaggeration
7	‘Polar research can contribute to the spreading of invasive species in many ways. Research vessels can transport invasive species by discharging ballast water into polar oceans. Research aircraft can carry invasive small mammals and seeds. Individual researchers can carry seeds within their clothing and luggage (Hughes et al., 2020).’ (Elshout et al., 2023, p.16).	Recklessness	Laziness

This activity does not assert that the researchers did show these vices, but refers to publicly discussed cases. Please see the reference list if you are interested in reading about these cases. Several of the researchers have been able to explain their actions, defend their choices and resolve the situations. Their experiences help us all to reflect on some of the hazards to be aware of, and when there is the potential for researchers to be challenged by others.

Part B

Now think about the pressures the researchers in Part A were under, to try to imagine what they might have been tempted by.

Write (or paste) the 'pressure' statement into the adjoining boxes to match each scenario. It doesn't matter which order the pressures are listed in the two right-hand columns. Some statements can be used more than once.

Choose from the following statements.

- To meet the perceived expectations of funders
- To reveal otherwise unknown information
- To retain the trust of the relationships built with participants
- To complete a doctorate
- To increase the chance of fully understanding the participant's lived experiences
- To increase the impact of the research for career advancement
- To cope with busyness in life

Number	Scenario	Pressure 1	Pressure 2
1	Alice Goffman was accused of abetting criminal behaviour by not reporting criminal behaviour she observed when she became part of a community in a deprived area of the United States (Lubet, 2015).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
2	Matthew Hedges was accused of being a spy when his doctoral research involved asking questions about power in policy decision-making in the United Arab Emirates (Parveen and Wintour, 2018).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
3	Natasha Whiteman initially carried out her doctoral research in an online fan forum without asking permission but, when the site	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

	crashed, she revealed she had archived material to share and those on the site were very unhappy to hear this (Whiteman, 2012).		
4	Dr Andrew Wakefield had his research, which caused alarm about possible effects of the mumps, measles and rubella vaccinations, discredited as a result of being found to have falsified results (Boseley, 2018).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
5	Marks Chabedi had his doctorate taken away after being accused of plagiarism and copying his thesis from another doctorate researcher (Infomory, 2013).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

6	In his book *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre accuses those involved with promoting fish oils in schools to increase pupil performance as being based on flimsy evidence (Goldacre, 2009).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*
7	'Polar research can contribute to the spreading of invasive species in many ways. Research vessels can transport invasive species by discharging ballast water into polar oceans. Research aircraft can carry invasive small mammals and seeds. Individual researchers can carry seeds within their clothing and luggage (Hughes et al., 2020).' (Elshout et al., 2023, p.16).	*Provide your answer...*	*Provide your answer...*

Discussion

Number	Scenario	Pressure 1	Pressure 2
1	Alice Goffman was accused of abetting criminal behaviour by not reporting criminal behaviour she observed when she became part of a community in a deprived area of the United States (Lubet, 2015).	To retain the trust of the relationships built with participants	To increase the chance of fully understanding the participant's lived experiences
2	Matthew Hedges was accused of being a spy when his doctoral research involved asking questions about power in policy	To reveal otherwise unknown information	To complete a doctorate

	decision-making in the United Arab Emirates (Parveen and Wintour, 2018).		
3	Natasha Whiteman initially carried out her doctoral research in an online fan forum without asking permission but, when the site crashed, she revealed she had archived material to share and those on the site were very unhappy to hear this (Whiteman, 2012).	To reveal otherwise unknown information	To complete a doctorate
4	Dr Andrew Wakefield had his research, which caused alarm about possible effects of the mumps, measles and rubella vaccinations, discredited as a result of being found to have falsified results (Boseley, 2018).	To meet the perceived expectations of funders	To increase the impact of the research for career advancement
5	Marks Chabedi had his doctorate taken away after being accused of plagiarism and copying his thesis from another doctorate researcher (Infomory, 2013).	To cope with busyness in life	To complete a doctorate
6	In his book *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre accuses those involved with promoting fish oils in schools to increase pupil performance as being based on flimsy evidence (Goldacre, 2009).	To meet the perceived expectations of funders	To increase the impact of the research for career advancement
7	‘Polar research can contribute to the spreading of invasive species in many ways. Research vessels can transport invasive species by discharging ballast water into polar oceans. Research aircraft can carry invasive small mammals and seeds. Individual researchers can carry seeds within their clothing and luggage (Hughes et al., 2020).’ (Elshout et al., 2023, p.16).	To meet the perceived expectations of funders	To reveal otherwise unknown information

> The converse to pressure could be a vacuum. In each of these cases this could have been demonstrated as a lack of attention to unintended consequences of a study. It should not be sufficient to claim ignorance or naivety. Efforts to anticipate risks, and/or to be self-reflexive enough to identify them and be prepared to mitigate risks of harm as they arise are virtuous behaviours to which researchers should aspire.

2 Meeting expectations of others

Figure 3 So many expectations to meet: what should a researcher do?

In Activity 1, you started to consider how researchers might feel pressure from different stakeholders in their research; for example, from sponsors and/or participants, and how this might influence their behaviour as researchers. When there is a tension between these pressures that is difficult to resolve, or the pressure from one stakeholder becomes difficult to deal with, a researcher can be tempted away from their virtuous intentions. Thus, researchers need to consider what these expectations might be when planning their research.

One of the best ways to identify pressures and challenges in order to plan ways to resolve them is to first get to know all those involved in and affected by the research. Then, try to develop an appreciation for their points of view and agendas and how the research might connect with these. In this way, the researcher will start to build positive, open, trusting relationships.

In Activity 2, you will reflect on some of the researchers you have heard from already on this course – Jonty, Kate, Alison and Liz and Teresa – in terms of what others expected from them and how it might have affected their behaviours when ending their research.

Activity 2 Meeting multiple expectations

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the following summaries of those whom these five researchers aimed to benefit:

Teresa's research (Session 1) with teachers developing as writers aimed to benefit the teachers involved with the programme, inform the provider who offered the programme and, by raising the attention given to teachers' developing their own skills in writing, benefit their pupils in future. By being part of a large-scale study, evidence was being offered that could inform the profession more widely.

Kate's research (Session 1) with youth workers supporting families when using outdoor education centres aimed to benefit the youth workers, as well as the policy and practice in the outdoor education centres and those who deployed the youth workers, including the educational trust funding her research. Ultimately, her research intended to benefit future families using these services.

Jonty's research (Session 4) about portage home visitors supporting families was aimed to support those who engaged with the research, the home visitors and the

Portage Association more broadly. Ultimately, his research intended to benefit future families using these services.

Alison and Liz's research (Session 4) with out-of-school girls in Zimbabwe aspired to help empower these girls, inform their families and those providing educational opportunities about the barriers to the girls engaging with education. They also intended their research to decrease the numbers of girls dropping out of education in the region.

You will notice they all wanted to benefit:

- those involved at the time of the research
- practitioners providing the services and interventions on which the research focused
- policy (whether at local or regional level)
- future children, young people, families.

Their studies were all published and have also contributed to the body of academic knowledge related to their particular field, guiding future researchers.

Think about:

- Can you identify any tensions between trying to meet all of these expectations in any one project?
- How might having so many beneficiaries lead to a range of plans for dissemination?
- What might a researcher need to do to increase their chances of their study having an impact beyond the timeframe of their particular study?

Provide your answer...

Read Case study 6.1, which is an example of how different accountabilities led to real tensions for a researcher in ways which they felt they couldn't control. Although this is in an educational context, the issues raised about whether it is possible to retain responsibilities for the impact of research could relate to any setting.

Case study 6.1 A case of split loyalties

This case study is adapted from the fictionalised BERA Research Ethics Case Study #3 Anticipating the unintended consequences of practitioner research:

> Paul chooses to explore the nature and impact of in-class teaching assistant (TA) support. His aim is to understand how TAs are being deployed in his own school, and how effective that deployment is in terms of supporting students' progress in English and Maths, and fostering wider student engagement and wellbeing. Paul receives ethical approval, through both his MAT and the university where he is enrolled, for a mixed-methods study.
>
> Paul's dissertation reports on the full mixed-methods study. His quantitative data analysis shows that, as it is currently being deployed, in-class TA support is having a minimal impact on students' progress in English and mathematics. He draws on anonymised observational data and interviews to describe the role of TAs and the training and support they receive, and to evidence the wider impacts they have, including building positive relationships with students and

> improving student attendance and wellbeing. He highlights the limitations of his analysis.
>
> A vice-principal at the school reads Paul's dissertation and asks him to produce some PowerPoint slides summarising his findings. The vice principal wants to present these at a meeting of the MAT's governing board and senior leadership team, to inform discussions about how to modify the use of TAs across the Trust…Paul spends considerable time in the evenings and at the weekend crafting a set of slides that he is satisfied present an accessible, accurate, thorough and contextualised account of his research findings. He describes a number of positive steps that, on the basis of his findings, the MAT could make to support TAs to have more of an impact, including further training.
>
> A couple of weeks after the meeting, senior staff announce that the number of TAs will be halved across the MAT in the forthcoming academic year. The vice principal tells Paul that this development had been likely for some time, and was not a direct result of his study. However, Paul doubts that this is entirely true, and feels very guilty. He is aware of the power and status imbalances in play in his research, and feels that the TAs were relying on him to advocate for the importance of the work they do. However, other aspects of his research were taken on board by the MAT: Paul is pleased to hear that the remaining TAs will be receiving training.
>
> (Pennacchia, 2018, pp. 1–5)

The full case study, which includes an analysis with reference to different paragraphs of the BERA ethical guidance, can be downloaded from the BERA website (make sure to open the link in a new tab/window).

Activity 3 Dealing with tensions between expectations

Allow approximately 20 minutes

In response to Case study 6.1, choose one of the following questions to respond to on the course forum and contribute a short post with your views.

1. What more could Paul have done to consider and accommodate the wellbeing and desires of the various stakeholders in his study?
2. Could Paul have done more to prevent the MAT from cutting the number of TAs? Is this a legitimate objective or concern for him in his capacity as a researcher?
3. What considerations might have affected the way the MAT behaved, thinking about its responsibilities to Paul, its TAs and/or its students?
4. What more could the university where Paul was enrolled for his master's programme have done to support Paul as a new researcher?

The issues Paul experienced in terms of tensions between his allegiances and his lack of control over the onward use of his reported data are ones which are not particular to his setting. Researchers can be proactive in a) keeping abreast of agendas of possible audiences, b) keeping possible audiences updated and informed and c) being explicit

about the tentativeness needed in reading the results, but they cannot expect to retain control of the onward use. You may be aware of responses of authors to what they see as misinterpretations of their research on social media or in official responses in academic journals. This is a route open to authors.

3 Dissemination

Figure 4 Making research findings public: making sure people know

Dissemination is an ethical obligation. Researchers commit to making their findings public as part of their responsibilities to the gifts of the data provided by those involved in their research. However, there is a danger that dissemination is limited to submitting academic papers to journals or dissertation reports to universities. There might be a sponsor who has also requested interim monitoring and a final report. However, these forms of communication reach only particular audiences and only meet certain obligations. As research progresses, if a researcher is serious about making a difference, it is important to keep the full range of potential beneficiaries of the study in mind.

3.1 ‘Horses for courses’: thinking about audiences

Figure 5 Different horses are suited to different courses – different means of dissemination are suited to different audiences

If beneficiaries of research are thought about as audiences for the research findings, it is helpful to think about how best to communicate with each audience.

Activity 4 Forms of dissemination

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Think about the following audiences and choose which form of dissemination might be useful and appropriate. Choose two forms from the drop-down you think are most suited for each audience.

Forms of dissemination:

- A short report – with key data presented and recommendations
- A full report – in an agreed format
- A workshop – in which the data is shared and explored with the audience
- An advice leaflet – to share with carers/parents/guardians
- Activities – designed to illustrate the findings of the research practically
- A recorded slideshow – explaining the findings and their significance.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

These are not the only forms of dissemination that can be used, but whichever type of dissemination format is used, there will be issues to consider around how the information is to be communicated.

Things to consider include:

- the language used needs to be understandable to and appropriate for the particular audience
- the content needs to be accessible
- choosing whether to use graphical or visual representations and, if so, what type
- how to illustrate the findings in both theoretical and practical ways
- being clear about what can be claimed more or less tentatively
- how to find out if the findings are thought to be useful to the audience.

3.2 Thinking about the scale of dissemination

Dissemination should not be thought about as a one-off activity, but as something that can pick up momentum and reach wider audiences than first anticipated.

Activity 5 Scale of dissemination

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Think about the role the following examples can play in the dissemination of research findings:

- websites – in which a set of materials are curated
- social media platforms – to share updates and alert followers to outputs
- blogs – to include researcher reflections and increase the transparency of the research.

Provide your answer...

Look at one or two of the following research websites, according to your interests, and note features that have been included to increase the scale of the dissemination of the findings (make sure to open each link in a new tab/window so you can easily return to this page):

- A European Horizon 2020 funded Dialogue and Argumentation for cultural Literacy Learning in Schools project
- Research at the Open University around creative pedagogies 'Excellence in research: inspiring creative pedagogies'
- Research in the Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies funded by the Academy of Finland
- The research pages of the social start-up Relationships Foundation
- The research pages of the UK national, government-funded Education Endowment Foundation
- The research pages of the UK inspection organisation Ofsted
- The research pages of the Notre Dame Center for STEM Education

3.3 Dissemination needs an audience

Research dissemination can be facilitated and tailored to audiences. This is not always thought of as an ethical issue, but it is when you think of this as part of a researcher's sense of duty and obligation. If research is completed with humility (thinking back to virtuous behaviours), the impact of the research will partly then rely on the audience to engage with it and take its ideas and/or practices forward.

Case study 6.2 introduces a project that started very small-scale, not even imagined originally as research, but ended up reaching and having an impact on a global audience.

Case study 6.2 Having a voice

A Kenyan boy, Richard, lives in a Maasai, pastoralist community where lions were a particular problem in killing cattle. He experimented with different ways to solve the problem. He found that neither fire nor a scarecrow worked to scare the lions but, by tricking them with flashing lights, they stayed away. Taking an old flashlight, a car battery, solar panel, and a motorbike indicator, he used electronics to make the lights flash on and off. He taught himself about electronics by taking his mother's radio apart.

On one level this is a story of entrepreneurship of a technical invention in the field of conservation.

It also a story of who benefits from research in a given context. The research came from Richard's unique position, knowledge and identity as a child in the Maasai community.

Activity 6 Purposes for/benefits of dissemination

Allow approximately 15 minutes for Part A and 5 minutes for Part B

Part A

Watch this extract from the story of the invention as presented in a TEDx talk (up to 04:26). Richard Turere: My invention that made peace with lions (open the link in a new tab/window)

Think about:

- Why this child carried out the research, rather than anyone else
- Who might be benefitting from the research
- How its dissemination via TEDx might have affected the impact of the research
- How respect is given to the researcher/inventor in the way the research is presented via TEDx
- Three or more key points on why this is an unusual research story.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have noted that it is unusual to come across such a child-led example of research (which would fit very highly on Hart's ladder of participation (1992)). Very often, adults tend to speak for children, even when presenting issues relating to children's lived experiences. You might have found it unusual for a child with limited resources to be so resourceful in experimenting. You may have appreciated the way TED allowed Richard to speak in his own words to present the research. Think of the different impact if it was described in a written report by an outsider. You might have been surprised at the far-reaching national and international benefits of this finding.

It is also unusual to see a voice being given to someone from this community in an international TEDx forum.

Part B

Think of a marginalised community in a context you know or have read about. What social, community, educational or health-related issues might a researcher explore from a child's perspective? Think about ways in which they could be helped to disseminate their findings.

Note your ideas.

Provide your answer...

4 Showing respect in dissemination

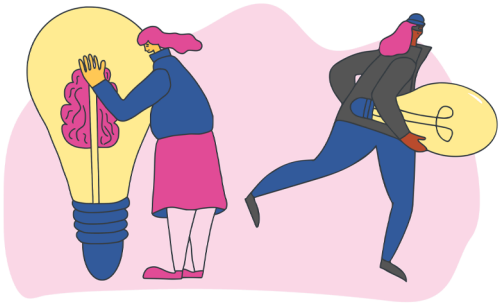

Figure 6 Avoiding plagiarism and infringements of copyright

Plagiarism is:

> an act or instance of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author's work as one's own, as by not crediting the original author.
>
> (dictionary.com, 2020)

There are different forms of plagiarism:

- direct plagiarism – when words are copied verbatim without being included in quotation marks
- mosaic plagiarism – when passages are paraphrased, have some words replaced and include another person’s ideas without using either quotation marks or indicating the source of the passage/idea
- self-plagiarism – using your own previously submitted writing (for example on courses) without acknowledging that it has been submitted before. This particularly applies to writing which has a digital footprint and can be found to have been used before. You should cite your own work to show the source. This helps a reader work out what is new in your current writing.

The authoring of work, which can now be aided by the use of tools using artificial intelligence, adds further complications to research integrity.

> While AI can help detect plagiarism, it also raises questions about the originality of content created with AI assistance. Authors may unintentionally incorporate AI-generated content that lacks proper citations, leading to ethical dilemmas surrounding academic integrity and potential plagiarism accusations.
>
> (Khan, 2025, n.d.)

All authors have a responsibility to avoid plagiarism. This is not confined to research contexts; it is considered part of academic integrity.

In the light of growing opportunities from and access to tools powered by artificial intelligence, advice is being offered on how to be transparent about their use. For further information and advice this may be a useful resource:
Recommendations on the Use of AI in Scholarly Communication (European Association of Science Editors, 2024).

Activity 7 Avoiding plagiarism

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch the 2 minute 20 second video Avoiding plagiarism (open the link in a new tab/ window).

Think about:

- why authors might be tempted to plagiarise
- how authors might plagiarise without intending to
- how the principles of plagiarism apply to collecting data from people and the respect needed to attribute the contributions of others
- the tension between anonymisation to protect the privacy of others and the right of others to have their ideas, words and content acknowledged.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

As you saw in the video, plagiarism is an issue to be avoided at all times when writing reports that refer to other people's work. Even in this course, you will have seen there are clear indications of the sources of the images, quotations and ideas summarised in reference lists and acknowledgements for each session.

In a research context, when a researcher submits their research paper to a journal to be considered for publication, the paper reviewers are asked to check that there is no evidence of plagiarism before making a decision to accept the paper. If a researcher submits their research report to a university, assessors will also review the originality of the work and any suspected plagiarism will be challenged, possibly leading to a case of academic misconduct being placed on the researcher. As you saw in Activity 1, charges of plagiarism can be brought after publication, and papers can be withdrawn from the public domain or research qualifications taken away.

As you saw briefly in Session 3, rights to copyright might also relate to data used in a research study and these need to be weighed against participants' rights to privacy. Participants might want to waive their rights to privacy and have their work acknowledged. This might be particularly relevant to check when data come from digital sources, where those who have posted data have chosen consciously to have a voice. However, it should not be assumed that this is the case. The use of digitally-posted data for research is not something that the original author(s) could have anticipated and they might not want to make this available with attribution. In these situations, a researcher can offer pseudonyms to authors for extracted quotes.

Activity 8 Boastfulness, humility and timidity

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Think about the following fictionalised statements from researchers' reports and how virtuous they can be considered to be. Match each statement with one of the virtues or vices listed below.

- Boastfulness
- Humility
- Timidity
- Dogmatism
- Reflexivity
- Indecisiveness

My study was confusing as some of the findings pointed to one conclusion but others contradicted this.

My study was carried out as I planned and my decisions during planning were all justifiable.

This study tentatively challenges accepted thinking about this topic by providing evidence which offers an alternative view.

This study has not been able to use some of the data collected because it was difficult to analyse.

My study makes a major contribution to national policy by identifying some key recommendations which need to be acted on.

There are limitations to this study which I became aware of and, if I was undertaking this kind of study again, I have some advice on what I would do differently.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Indecisiveness

Dogmatism

Humility

Timidity

Boastfulness

Reflexivity

Disseminating research is the vehicle for sharing the learning the researcher has gained. In it, the researcher answers their research questions, states which hypotheses can be supported and which cannot, and outlines new questions which arise from surprising findings. There are also likely to be new understandings of how to collect and make sense of data, and new appreciations of how to behave as an ethical researcher which can also be disseminated.

5 Legacy

Figure 7 What is a researcher's legacy? Beautiful, impactful or merely decorative?

Imagine you are a researcher and you have completed your research. You have disseminated your research to all those you hope will benefit. You then build a website for your project in order to keep the findings in the public domain, and you are thinking about what to do next.

Before you turn to your next project, think back to the list of responsibilities you have for the piece of research that has just been completed. Activity 9 supports thinking about the legacy your research might have.

The BERA ethical guidelines for educational research (2024) list the following responsibilities:

- responsibilities to participants
- responsibilities to sponsors, clients and stakeholders and the environment in research
- responsibilities to the community of educational researchers
- responsibilities for publication and dissemination
- responsibilities for researchers' wellbeing and development.

Activity 9 Planning for legacy

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Review the following checklist and add ideas to the third column, exploring how the legacy of the research might be limited if these actions are not followed.

Responsibilities to…	Actions for legacy…	Possible negative consequences if not considered
Participants	Have I thanked all those involved? Is it culturally appropriate to offer a gift? Have I made my research findings available?	*Provide your answer...*
Sponsors, clients and stakeholders and the environment	Did I meet all the requirements of me? Did I report on time? Did I manage my budget (if relevant) efficiently? Did I minimise or offset any harm to the environment?	*Provide your answer...*
Community of educational researchers	Have I developed positive relationships with those in the research site? Have I raised positive understandings of research?	*Provide your answer...*

Publish and disseminate	Can people find my research findings readily? Did I reach as many potential audiences as might have been interested in my findings?	*Provide your answer...*
My own wellbeing and development	Have I increased my skills and confidence in carrying out research? Have I identified training I need?	*Provide your answer...*

6 This session’s quiz

Congratulations on almost reaching the end of the course.

Now it’s time to complete the Session 6 badge quiz. It is similar to the quiz that you took at the end of Session 3, with 15 questions in total.

Session 6 compulsory quiz

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you’re not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new window or tab then come back here when you’re finished.

7 Summary of Session 6

Exiting research ethically

This course has been designed to walk you through the research process, highlighting the ethical dimensions of all stages of research. A virtuous researcher starts to think about ethics when the focus for the research is being chosen and continues their ethical thinking through to after the study has been reported.

You have seen how each researcher is faced with a unique context and set of issues, and will need to weigh up the options to them and make decisions according to their own values, maintaining an awareness of relevant guidance and legal obligations. Thinking ahead, planning and keeping ethical actions in mind means that research will be valid and inform the field. It will also leave those who have been involved with the research more informed about what research might involve, how this can be a valuable and constructive experience and leave behind an appetite for research. A researcher can engage with their research confidently by:

- getting to know their topic
- reading how other researchers have approached this kind of research
- identifying all those who are likely to be involved or affected by their research and getting to know their agendas, interests and preferences
- making themselves aware of relevant legislation, regulations and ethical guidelines
- being committed to keeping their promises whilst also being flexible to responding to issues which appear to challenge these
- having support from others to think through ethical decision-making.

Activity 10 Take-aways from Session 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

List the ten top tips you would offer to a researcher to be a virtuous and ethical researcher. Keep this list for use should you want to carry out your own research, or in case you are asked to advise or comment on research carried out by others.

Provide your answer...

Well done! You have now completed the course. The course team hope you have found the content and activities useful and wish you well for the future, whether as a researcher or a critical consumer (reader or other stakeholder) of research.

Tell us what you think

Now you've come to the end of the course, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this short end-of-course survey (you may have already completed this survey at the end of Session 3).

Review your answers

Session 1

Activity 1:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 2:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 3:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 6:

	Kate's doctoral research with youth workers	**Teresa's research about teachers as writers**
Positionality?	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
What?	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Why?	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
For whom?	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
A key issue you can imagine	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

Session 2

Activity 1:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 4:

Research question	1 Approach would most like to use	2 Approach might consider using	3 Approach you are less like using

A	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entere*
B	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entere*
C	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entere*
D	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entere*

Activity 6:

Display of content entered previously

Display of content entered previously

Activity 7:

Display of content entered previously

Session 3

Activity 2:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 3:

Display of content entered previously

Session 4

Activity 1:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 3:

Who?	**Could indicate vulnerability?** (Yes/no/depends)	**Why?** (group, topic, context or not applicable)
1. Young person, 19, conducting participatory workshop on teenage	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

pregnancy and sexual health.		
2. Researcher recording audio interviews with parents in home-school group.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
3. Documentary research in census pre-1911 using outdated/ offensive terms for disability.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
4. Filming play at home of child under 16 with communication impairment.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
5. Seeking consent from parent with limited English to film classroom of child under 16.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
6. Analysing nurses' reflective journals on different nursing experiences.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
7. Large-scale online survey of women's perceptions of body image.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
8. Researcher conducting psychology experiment on eye tracking and paintings.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

9. Conducting focus group with young adults after leaving care on their fostering and care home experiences.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
10. Visual analysis of drawings of conflict by displaced people.	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

Activity 4:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 7:

Display of content entered previously

Session 5

Activity 1:

Display of content entered previously	Disseminating – through publication or performance
Display of content entered previously	Generating – collecting data, ideas
Display of content entered previously	Creating – related to results, interpretations, critiques and models or theoretical insights
Display of content entered previously	Negotiating – gaining access, permissions, consent and support
Display of content entered previously	Framing – setting questions or hypotheses
Display of content entered previously	Reflecting – on personal learning about the process of research

Activity 2:

Research activity	Solo	Team
Interviewing close colleagues inside your own organisation	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Deciding what to include and what to leave out of a survey	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Making arrangements for field work in more than one site over a wide geographical area using a travel budget	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Stopping field work when participants become upset and seek a debriefing	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Making observational notes in a group setting	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Using an unfamiliar software package for analysing data	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Conducting field work where the language and culture is new to you	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Coding and grouping of data for analysis	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Responding to a senior person who wants to	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

influence your research for a different agenda		
Establishing trust in research relationships before collecting data on sensitive topics	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Interrupting field work when the situation becomes physically or psychologically unsafe	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Finding out something unexpected and exciting in your data	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Identifying a concerning safeguarding issue during field work	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Designing a poster to disseminate your emerging findings	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*
Making a presentation about your research	*Display of content entered previously*	*Display of content entered previously*

Activity 6:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 9:

Display of content entered previously

Session 6

Activity 2:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 5:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 6:

Display of content entered previously

Display of content entered previously

Activity 7:

Display of content entered previously

Activity 9:

Responsibilities to…	**Actions for legacy…**	**Possible negative consequences if not considered**
Participants	Have I thanked all those involved? Is it culturally appropriate to offer a gift? Have I made my research findings available?	*Display of content entered previously*
Sponsors, clients and stakeholders and the environment	Did I meet all the requirements of me? Did I report on time? Did I manage my budget (if relevant) efficiently? Did I minimise or offset any harm to the environment?	*Display of content entered previously*
Community of educational researchers	Have I developed positive relationships with those in the research site? Have I raised positive understandings of research?	*Display of content entered previously*
Publish and disseminate	Can people find my research findings readily? Did I reach as many potential audiences as might have been interested in my findings?	*Display of content entered previously*
My own wellbeing and development	Have I increased my skills and confidence in carrying out research? Have I identified training I need?	*Display of content entered previously*

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References

Acknowledgements

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