

Summary handout

This activity considered ethics in research. Universities and research organisations have panels that judge whether research conforms to ethics principles.

Researchers must show they have followed **all** ethics guidelines, not just some of them.

Interpreting the ethics guidelines is rarely straightforward and so must be negotiated between the researchers and their ethics panels.

Psychological research in the UK must follow the guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS). The BPS guidelines are available at:

www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/support-for-researchers_home.cfm

Ethics guidelines include a complex mix of requirements. This activity focussed on three:

- researchers must avoid **risk** to psychological well-being, physical health, values or dignity of participants
- participants should give **informed consent** before taking part in research
- participants should have the right to **withdraw** from the research at any point

Risk to well-being, health, values and dignity

- Research must not involve participants in any task that might risk their physical or mental well-being.
- Researchers must not ask participants to reveal confidential or sensitive information publicly.
- Deciding what might be risky is not straightforward and people will have different opinions about this.

Informed consent

- For participants to give informed consent they must know they are taking part in research. Research should not be carried out secretly.
- For consent to be properly ‘informed’ participants should be given accurate information about the nature of the study and what they are being asked to do.
- Giving participants full information may change their behaviour and therefore change the outcomes of the research. This is rarely an acceptable reason for withholding information.
- Some limited deception may sometimes be permissible.

Right to withdraw

- For participants to have the right to withdraw from research they must have been told they are taking part in research in the first place.
- Participants should also be told explicitly that they can stop taking part in the research.