# Analysing the ethical issues

The ethical framework invites you to analyse a project from four different perspectives.

1. **External considerations.** This is a set of questions that focus on the wider implications of what you are doing.
2. **Consequences.** This set of questions helps you to think about the consequences of doing this work for all those concerned: the researcher, the participants, the institution, and society as a whole.
3. **Doing your duty.** This set of questions helps you to focus on how to behave. You are encouraged to think about doing your duty and avoiding harm to anyone involved.
4. **Relationships.** This set of questions helps you to focus on the relationships at the heart of the research. Whose support to you need? How can you establish trust?

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| **Issue** | **Questions to ask** |
| **External considerations** | |
| Cultural sensitivity | What is the attitude of my school to research?  Am I likely to encounter interest, suspicion, enthusiasm? Is this a worthwhile topic to research – does it matter to people in the school? |
| Awareness of all parts of the institution | Who needs to know what I am doing?  Who is likely to be affected?  Who is likely to be interested?  Who might be able to contribute? |
| Responsive communication – awareness of the wishes of others | How might my work be viewed/interpreted by others in the school?  How will the language I use be interpreted? |
| Responsibilities to sponsors | If you are receiving financial support, or have been given time in which to conduct your project then you need to consider your responsibilities to the people supporting you. |
| Codes of practice | Have I worked within the British Educational Research Association guidelines?  Are there other relevant codes which might also be applicable? |
| Efficiency/use of resources | Have I made efficient use of the resources available to me – including people’s time? |
| Quality of evidence on which conclusions are based | What recommendations am I going to make from this project?  Have I got enough evidence to back-up my conclusions and recommendations?  Will people believe me? |
| The law | What legal requirements relating to working with children do I need to comply with?  Am I aware of my data protection responsibilities?  Am I aware of the need for disclosure of criminal activity?  Do I need written permissions? If so, from whom? |
| Risk | Are there any risks to anyone or to the institution as a result of this research? |

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| **Consequential/Utilitarian** | |
| Benefits for participants | What are the benefits of me doing this research to the participants?  Would an alternative methodology bring greater individual benefits? |
| Benefits for particular groups/organisation | What are the benefits of me doing my research to the school/department?  Could these be increased in any way?  How will I ensure that they know about my findings?  Is my work relevant to the school development plan?  Can I justify my choice of methods to my sponsors? |
| Most benefits for society | Is this a worthwhile area to research?  Am I contributing to the ‘greater good’?  Is it high quality and open to scrutiny? |
| Avoidance of harm | Could this project upset anyone in any way?  Are there any sensitive issues likely to be discussed or aspects of the study likely to cause discomfort or stress?  Is there anything in my design that could affect any of the participants in an adverse way? |
| Benefits for the researcher | Am I going to be able to get enough data to find out what I want to know?  What might I learn from this project?  Will it help in my long-term life-goals? |
| **Deontological** | |
| Avoidance of wrong – honesty and candour | Have I been open and honest **in advance** with everyone involved?  Are participants aware that they can withdraw if they wish? |
| Fairness | Have I treated all participants fairly?  Am I using incentives fairly?  Will I acknowledge everyone involved fairly? |
| Reciprocity | Do the participants and other people affected understand what I am doing and why?  Do the participants understand what is expected of them?  Have I negotiated mutually beneficial arrangements? |
| Tell the truth | If there is any need for covert research and how will I deal with this?  What will I do if I find out something that the participants/school/department do not like? |
| Keep promises | How will I ensure confidentiality?  What promises have I made?  Can I keep them? |
| Do the most positive good | Is there any other way I could carry out this research that would bring more benefits to those involved? |
| **Relational/Individual** | |
| Genuine collaboration/ trust established | Who are the key people involved?  How can I build a constructive relationship with them? |
| Avoid imposition/respect autonomy | Am I making unreasonable or sensitive demands on any individuals?  Do they appreciate that participation is voluntary? |
| Confirmation of findings | What steps will I take in my methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings?  Can I involve participants in validation?  How will I report my findings? |
| Respect persons equally | How will I demonstrate my respect for all participants?  Have I treated pupils in the same way as teachers? |