Research Ethics Policy

Policy Statement
Royal Holloway, University of London (the College) is committed to conducting research and research activities within a robust ethical framework and maintaining integrity at all times. This policy must be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice for Research, the ethics guidance and related polices.

Scope
This policy addresses unfunded and funded research¹ and applies to employed staff, students or other individuals acting on behalf of the College. Those conducting research must ensure that they do so having fully considered the ethical impactions of their research activity and carry out that activity to the highest ethical standards. The College requires all research at Royal Holloway to have an ethical review. Even if your research project has no ethical issues, you will be required to have completed the process and be in receipt of an outcome letter confirming ethical approval before the start of the research activity.

Principles
All Staff and students who undertake research are expected to adhere to the ‘Concordat to Support Research Integrity’, which includes five core elements² and Royal Holloway expectations:

- **honesty** in all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; in reporting on research methods and procedures; in gathering data; in using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and in conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings

- **rigour**, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards, and in performing research and using appropriate methods; in adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; in drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and in communicating the results

- **transparency and open communication** in declaring potential competing interests; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data; in making research findings widely available, which includes publishing or otherwise sharing negative or null results to recognise their value as part of the research process; and in presenting the work to other researchers and to the public

- **care and respect** for all participants in research, and for the subjects, users and beneficiaries of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the integrity of the research record

- **accountability** of funders, employers and researchers to collectively create a research environment in which individuals and organisations are empowered and enabled to own the research process. Those engaged with research must also ensure that individuals and organisations are held to account when behaviour falls short of the standards set by this concordat

- **Behave with integrity and professionalism**: Researchers are expected to work in accordance with Royal Holloway’s ‘Statement on Research Performance Expectations’ as approved by Academic Board. Researchers have an obligation to conduct their research with integrity and transparency and to accurately present their data and research findings.

¹ In accordance to the frascati definition, please see what is research

² These core elements of research integrity apply to all aspects of research, including the preparation and submission of grant and project proposals, the publication and dissemination of findings, and the provision of expert review on the proposals or publications of others
• **Maximise benefit:** Ensuring that you maximise the benefits of your work to the public is part of your obligation to research participants and scholarship. This would normally include:
  - Ensuring that the aims of the research are transparent
  - Designing, reviewing and conducting research in a manner that ensures quality and integrity whilst maximising the chance of obtaining useful results;
  - Ensuring that research is effectively and appropriately disseminated.

• **Fairness:** You are expected to be fair to your participants by respecting their autonomy and not coercing them, minimising any harm by protecting your data and taking other measures to avoid distress, and to avoid discriminating against individuals or groups.

Please review the [Code of Good Research Practice](#) for further guidance.

**Ethical Review Process**

The College will provide resources to enable research to be scrutinised and assessed. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that they seek ethical approval before the start of the research activity and that they conduct their research within the ethical framework.

All research requires ethical approval at one or more of the following levels:

- **Within Departments**
  Ethical review for undergraduate and postgraduate taught (PGT) research projects is dealt with within departments. All other projects should go through the RHUL online ethical review process.

- **Research Ethics Committee (REC)**
  The RHUL Research Ethics Committee deals with the ethical review of staff and postgraduate research (PGR) projects. The Committee is chaired by the Senior Vice-Principal and members include a lay member of Council, a consultant psychiatrist, and a number of senior academics. Where necessary, additional members with subject expertise not on the Committee are consulted.

- **External Ethics Committees (EEC)**
  Research may need to be referred to an external ethics committee (EEC) as well as the REC whenever an institution additional to the home institution is involved.

**Issues Arising from Research**

There may be issues that arise from research projects undertaken that need to be reported, or where participants have concerns that they wish to raise with the College. In these cases the secretary to the Ethics Committee should be contacted at [ethics@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@rhul.ac.uk)

Where research gains press attention for ethical matters this should be raised immediately with the Director of Communications and the Chair of the Ethics committee, via the secretary at [ethics@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@rhul.ac.uk).

**Roles and Responsibility**

**Researchers**

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that they and their research team members are familiar with and adhere to institutional policies and codes throughout the lifecycle of the research project. For further reference please see the [*PI statement of responsibilities*](#). Researchers must ensure that ethical approval is gained before the start of the research activity and the activity in line with the approved application. Researchers must ensure that they have sought ethical approval from internal and external bodies where required including approval from international ethics board if the research activity is to be conducted internationally. Researchers must ensure that due diligence, safeguarding and health and safety requirements and any other governance process are fully executed before the start of the research activity.
Research Ethics Committee
The Research Ethics Committee is chaired by the Deputy Principal (Academic) and is responsible for reviewing applications at the highest level. The Committee reviews a sample of applications at each meeting and oversees governance issues related to Research Ethics within the college and ensure compliance with new legislation. The Committee membership includes, a medically-qualified member external to the College and a member of the College Council.

School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee
The School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee oversees the ethics approval process for research projects from UG and PGT students. The School are responsible for providing reports to the Research Ethics Committee and supporting all ethical applications.

Departments
Departments are responsible for providing ethical reviewers and supporting researchers via peer review process in order to address potential ethical issues.

Research and Innovation
The Research Ethics and Integrity Manager is responsible for supporting the Research Ethics Committee and the online ethics system.

Misconduct
In cases where researchers do not comply with this policy or the Research Ethics Committee considers the project or activity has been conducted outside of the approved conditions, this may be considered a case of misconduct, please see Code of Research Misconduct. Cases of misconduct may result in disciplinary action.

Further information and Guidance
If anyone considers that this policy has not been followed, in the first instance they should raise the matter with the Research Ethics and Integrity Manager.
Further information on the interpretation and application of this policy may be obtained from ethics@rhul.ac.uk

Related policies and procedures
- Data protection policy
- Data management Policy
- Code of Good Research Practice
- Code of misconduct
- Safeguarding (in progress)
- Statement of expectations
- Guidelines on relationships involving staff, students & others
- Health and Safety – Risk Assessment
- Whistleblowing
- Disciplinary Policy

Associated Guidance
Research Ethics Guide 1: Do I need Ethical Approval?
Research Ethics Guide 2: Consent
Research Ethics Guide 3: Research Participants
Research Ethics Guide 4: Human Tissue Act compliance
Research Ethics Guide 5: Risks
Research Ethics Guide 6: External Approval
Research Ethics Guide 7: Research Data
Research Ethics Guide 8: External guidance
Research Ethics Guide 9: Amendments to an approved submission
Research Ethics Guide 10: Institutional Ethical Approval Process (in progress)
Research Ethics Guide 11: Safeguarding (in progress)
Research Ethics Guide 12: Research involving the NHS
Research Ethics Guide 13: Personal data
Research Ethics Guide 14: Supporting Materials
Research Ethics Guide 15: Internet Mediated Research

Approved by: Research Ethics Committee
Research Knowledge Exchange Committee

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