



# **HIGHER EDUCATION**

# **STUDENT RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY**

**Research Involving Human and Animal Subjects**

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# 1. Introduction

1.1.1. This policy is designed to outline University Centre Somerset's (UCS's) principles and procedures to support good practice in student research and scholarly inquiry. UCS expects high standards of academic integrity in the primary and secondary research undertaken by students. It has established a set of fundamental principles to ensure the ethical integrity of research involving human participants, animal subjects and principles of data confidentiality and access.

1.1.2. Conducting research and/or scholarly inquiry at an undergraduate or postgraduate level at UCS enables students to gain academic and professional experience, progresses their knowledge in the subject discipline and develops their problem-solving competencies and transferable skills. Research enables students to gain more in-depth knowledge within their subject field and gain valuable skills in readiness for employment and career direction.

## 2. Scope

2.1.1. This policy applies to all undergraduate or postgraduate (Higher Education (HE)) students studying at University Centre Somerset (UCS) and carrying out primary and/or secondary research as part of their studies, and/or acting as partners in research with curriculum staff. It refers to students who are undertaking dissertations, theses, research projects and extended projects, or carrying out any other research-related assessment. All students must ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, relevant UCS/partner university policies and programme requirements when carrying out primary and/or secondary research or any type of scholarly inquiry within their subject discipline.

2.1.2. Any research project undertaken by an HE student will be required to adhere to the validating university's ethical clearance processes and procedures where applicable. HE students on programmes validated by The Open University (OU) or Pearson should refer to this policy. At UCS, a Curriculum Research Ethics Panel that includes experienced staff will review and grant approval where appropriate. Any queries should be directed to the relevant Module Leader or Course Leader.

2.1.3. Projects that are undertaken by a member of UCS staff as a lead researcher with students acting as partners in research, will require ethical clearance by the UCS Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee and/or other external organisations' Ethics Committees (if relevant).

## 3. Policy Statement

3.1.1. Student research is defined as "student engagement from induction to graduation, individually and in groups, in research and inquiry into disciplinary, professional and community-based problems and issues, including involvement in knowledge exchange activities"<sup>1</sup>. HE students at UCS are expected to conduct primary and/or secondary research with core principles of academic integrity and honesty, in line with relevant UCS and, where applicable, partner university policies and procedures. Any students intending to undertake

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<sup>1</sup> Childs, P. (2005) *Leading, promoting and supporting undergraduate research in the new university sector*. Available at:

primary research must undergo their Curriculum Area Ethics Committee ethical clearance process. Student researchers must demonstrate respect, care and transparency to all their research subjects for approved primary projects.

3.1.2. UCS is committed to:

- Providing opportunities for HE students to engage in primary and secondary research and apply theory into practice.
- Enhancing the student experience by providing a scholarly environment within their subject discipline, thus enabling the achievement of the best outcomes possible and increasing their prospects for employability.
- Providing opportunities for students, where possible and feasible, to engage in research and scholarly inquiry alongside curriculum staff (students acting as partners in research).

3.1.3. The standards covered in this policy are intended to outline the principles of research ethics but may not address all the situations, and students should seek further advice from their research project supervisor and/or Curriculum Area Ethics Committee. This policy makes references to other applicable UCS policies and external points that supplement this policy.

## 4. Ethical Principles in Student Research

4.1.1. In broad terms research ethics refers to the moral principles and practices guiding research, from its inception through to completion and publication of results and beyond – for example, the curation of data and physical samples, knowledge exchange and impact activities after the research has been published<sup>1</sup>. Students undertaking research at UCS must abide by the principles of research ethics. Ethics is about ensuring proper research conduct. Students are expected to adhere to honest research practices with an understanding of what is acceptable and what is not. Research ethics is guided by three moral principles: integrity, accountability and transparency.

4.1.2. Students must ensure that they are guided by honesty, truthfulness and fairness when conducting a research study. They must ensure:

- Objectivity in their research without their own personal biases
- Possible conflicts of interest are identified and declared
- Truthful and accurate representation of data
- Respect and acknowledgment of intellectual property<sup>2</sup>.

4.1.3. Those undertaking social research involving human participants may find it particularly useful to consult the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics<sup>3</sup>. Ethical clearance is required for all social sciences disciplines, animal management, wildlife conservation projects that involve primary research with human and/or animal subjects,

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<sup>1</sup> Research Ethics and Innovation (2023) *Key terms glossary*. Available at:

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/useful-resources/keyterms-glossary/>

<sup>2</sup> Siu, C. and Comerasamy, H. (2013) *Doing a research project in nursing and midwifery*. London: Sage.

<sup>3</sup> UK Research and Innovation (2023) *Research ethics guidance*. Available at:

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/>

environmental research or research involving sensitive data. This applies to both primary and secondary research project proposals. Students will learn about project design and relevant subject discipline methodologies as part of their course and/or relevant modules before completing their research project proposal and ethical clearance forms.

## 5. Curriculum Area Ethics Committees

5.1.1. All UCS HE students' project proposals must undergo a full ethical clearance review and secure approval from their Curriculum Area Ethics Committee. Each Curriculum Area/Faculty will ensure that HE students receive appropriate teaching and training in research methodologies and the conduct of ethical research prior to the completion of the research project proposal. Timescales and timing of submission of ethical clearance forms and their consideration will be confirmed by the relevant Module Leader.

5.1.2. Student primary projects involving any of the following factors must undergo a full ethical scrutiny by the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee: any projects involving human participants and their data, greater detail is required for those which are classed vulnerable, for example, children, elderly, people with cognitive impairments, etc. (*see separate section involving NHS Health Care guidance*); projects involving animals, wildlife conservation, environmental projects, etc.

5.1.3. Particular ethical scrutiny is required for the following types of projects:

- Requirement for co-operation of a gatekeeper (pupils at school, children at a nursery, nursing home residents)
- Sensitive topics (religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.)
- Administering food or other substances to participants
- Obtaining tissue samples, including blood samples from participants
- Interventional techniques (engagement in vigorous physical exercise)
- Prolonged or repetitive testing
- The collection or processing of sensitive personal data
- Any video or audio recording of people
- Projects involving social media data
- Projects involving Health & Safety
- Environmental projects
- Projects involving animals and/or wildlife conservation
- Any projects involving any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest
- Any work that is intended to be publicly available, including social media.

5.1.4. This is not an exhaustive list of all potential research types that may require ethical clearance. All research involving human participants must abide by the UCS ethical guidance on recruiting research participants. They may be required to seek gatekeepers' consent and/or produce research participant consent forms. A gatekeeper is any person or institution that acts as an intermediary between the data collector/researcher and a potential research respondent/participant. A gatekeeper may have the power to grant or

deny permission for access to potential research participants<sup>4</sup>. The primary role of a gatekeeper is to prevent harm and protect those in their care<sup>5</sup>.

5.1.5. Students are required to consider the ethical risks of any procedure within a research project which involves human participants, personal or sensitive data or any other factors in the list above. Students must seek advice from the relevant Curriculum Area Ethics panel in case of any doubt.

5.1.6. Those students who are undertaking approved research, must remain alert about any emerging ethical issues throughout the life of their research project and speak to their research project supervisor immediately to alert them of any potential issues. They must speak to their supervisor about any amendments to the design or methodology of their project. Re-approval by the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee may be required. Depending on the issues identified, the project supervisor may need to refer to the UCS Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee for further advice. For any extenuating circumstances, students must refer to the UCS Extenuating Circumstances Policy<sup>6</sup>.

## **5.2. The Role of the Curriculum Area Ethics Committees**

5.2.1. The role of the Curriculum Area Committee is to ensure that proposed student projects in their Curriculum Area/Faculty obtain the appropriate ethical review in accordance with this policy. The review process ensures that all such projects adhere to relevant UCS and, where applicable, partner University policies, legislation, professional guidelines and best practice.

5.2.2. Curriculum Area Ethics Committees consist of a minimum of two curriculum staff teaching at HE level, with one being an immediate student project supervisor, and at least one independent reviewer with expertise in research ethical clearance (for example, an experienced academic or a member of the UCS Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee).

5.2.3. The chair of the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee will feedback to the UCS Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee via the HE Team [HE@btc.ac.uk](mailto:HE@btc.ac.uk) on the year's student project proposals, how well the ethical clearance process ran, good practice identified and any issues encountered along with how these were resolved.

5.2.4. Signed consent forms should be stored securely within the Course Virtual Learning Environment to maintain good practice in relation to GDPR.

## **5.3. The Process of Reviewing Research Project Applications**

5.3.1. Where possible and feasible, each Curriculum Area will arrange presentations of student research proposals for a panel hearing to ensure further transparency. Depending on the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee arrangements, student research project proposal forms, ethical clearance forms and other relevant documentation will be submitted for review in advance. Following student presentations and Q&A sessions, the panel members will meet to discuss each project proposal to make decisions. Ethics Committees will meet face-to-face or online via UCS approved digital platforms. They may also conduct further discussions via email or other electronic media. For any complex

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<sup>4</sup> Lavrakas, P.J. (ed.) (2008) *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 299-300

<sup>5</sup> Dempsey, L. et al. (2016) 'Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research', *Research in Nursing and Health*, 39 (6), pp. 480-490. doi: 10.1002/nurs.21743

<sup>6</sup> UCS (2022) *Extenuating Circumstances Policy*. UCS website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

queries in relation to individual student projects, members of the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee will seek further advice from the UCS RSE Committee.

5.3.2. Following the panel meeting, feedback will be provided for each student in writing by their project supervisor on the outcomes of their research project proposal. The project proposal outcomes may be as follows:

- Approved
- Requiring amendments based on the panel's recommendations
- Rejected, with feedback from the panel provided.

5.3.3. Students are advised to speak to their project supervisor in the first instance if they have any concerns about their research project proposal and ethical clearance requirements, prior to the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee panel hearing.

5.3.4. All Curriculum Area Ethics Committees are expected to report to the UCS Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee on any new strategies and processes adopted to ensure transparency and adoption of good practice in reviewing student research project proposals.

## 6. Health and Social Care Student Research

6.1.1. The NHS Health Research Authority stipulates the student research eligibility criteria introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. Undergraduate level standalone research that requires an ethics review and/or Health Research Authority (HRA) and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Approval (or devolved administration equivalent) **cannot** take place. UCS promotes other ways for students to experience health research:

- Health or social care research that does not involve patients, service users, NHS staff as participants or identifiable samples/tissue or identifiable data
- Secondary research and literature reviews
- Mock review panels / mock research governance. Students may be encouraged to form a mock Research and Ethics Committee (REC) and develop a project proposal for submission and scrutiny. Students may play the role of an applicant or committee member with the process mentored by experienced staff. This gives students a much richer and more rounded experience of research and research governance<sup>7</sup>.

6.1.2. UCS will promote awareness of research in health and social care, including:

- research types
- carrying out research
- ethics
- getting research approved
- consent in research
- analysing and presenting data
- public involvement

6.1.3. This promotes students' understanding and skills development in research.

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<sup>7</sup> NHS Health Research Authority (2023) *Other ways for students to experience health research*. Available at: <https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/research-planning/student-research/#alternatives>

Therefore, research planning and applications may be included in the curriculum and mock Research Ethics Committees (RECs) may be held to simulate the process. Actual research will not be permitted to be carried out unless it is:

- research that is carried out in an area that is not health or social care and is fully approved.
- research that does not involve patients and/or service users or NHS staff.

## 7. Students as Partners in Research

7.1.1. UCS undergraduate and postgraduate students can engage in research and scholarship alongside curriculum staff. Such an approach can help enhance students' learning experience, provide a more in-depth understanding of their subject discipline, enhance employability prospects, and prepare them to become early career researchers.

7.1.2. UCS was an early adoptee of the national Scholarship Framework<sup>8</sup> which provides a toolkit of resources which aims to support higher education colleges and enhance student learning through forms of scholarly activity. UCS is also involved with the Advance HE College Based Higher Education project on sharing good practice in relation to the development of research within colleges. Engaging students in research and inquiry into their subject area provides students with a distinct opportunity to be partners in their learning journey; they can also act as research assistants to the staff members who are leading on research projects.

7.1.3. As an early adoptee of the national Scholarship Framework, UCS is committed to promoting Boyer's (1990) four scholarships that relate to students' learning activities. These include:

- Engagement in inquiry-based learning; undergraduate research and consultancy projects; co-research projects with staff
- Engagement in integrating material from different sources, including across disciplines; integrating life and work experience with academic studies; reflecting on implications of studies for personal development
- Engagement with local, national, and international community service projects; volunteering; knowledge exchange projects; applying knowledge and skills in workbased placements
- Engagement in mentoring; peer support and assessment; collaborative group work; learners as explicit partners in educational development and inquiry (Education and Training Foundation, 2023)<sup>9</sup>.

7.1.4. To support students' understanding of research and scholarship, UCS aims, where possible, to design curriculum that enables students to be involved in all or parts of the following research models:

- Research-led: Learning about current research in the discipline. Here the curriculum focus is to ensure that what students learn clearly reflects current and ongoing research in their discipline. This may include research done by staff teaching them.

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<sup>8</sup> Education and Training Foundation (2022) *The Scholarship Framework*. Available at: <https://scholarship.excellencegateway.org.uk/framework>

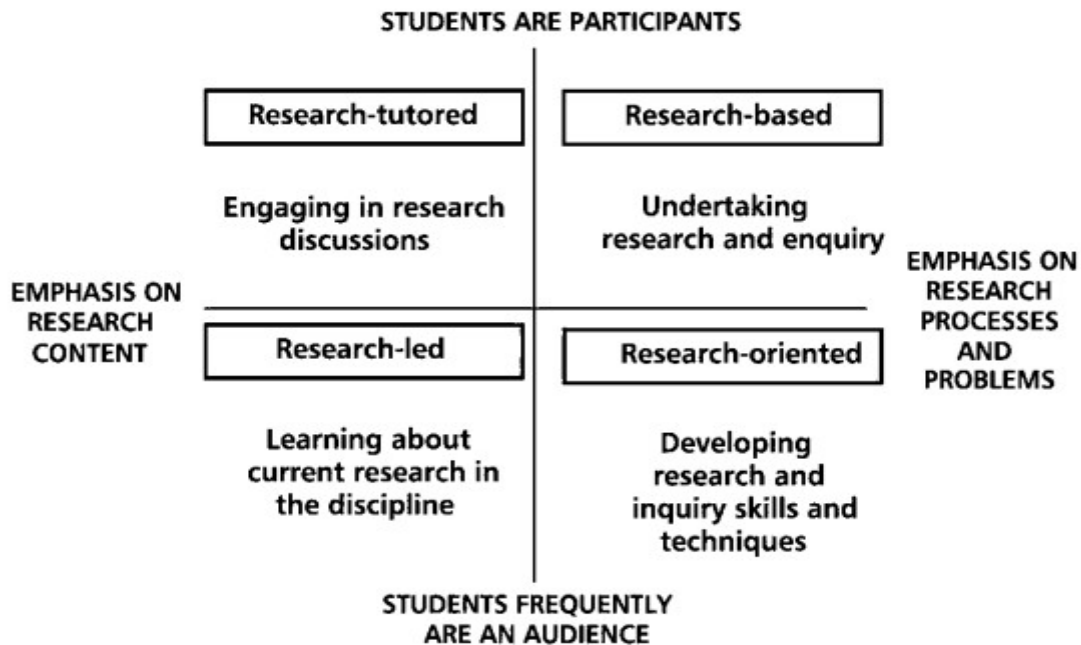
<sup>9</sup> The Education and Training Foundation (2023) *What is scholarship? Background and definitions of scholarship*. Available at: <https://scholarship.excellencegateway.org.uk/framework/what-is-scholarship>

- **Research-oriented:** Developing research skills and techniques. Here the focus is on developing students' knowledge of and ability to carry out the research methodologies and methods appropriate to their discipline(s) or profession.
- **Research-based:** Undertaking research and inquiry. Here the curriculum focus is on ensuring that as much as possible the student learns in research and or inquiry mode

(i.e. the students become producers of knowledge not just consumers)

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- **Research-tutored:** Engaging in research discussions. Here the focus is on students and staff critically discussing research in the discipline as, for example, in many seminar-based courses<sup>10</sup>

Figure 1: The nature of undergraduate research and inquiry<sup>12</sup>



7.1.5. The function of a lead investigator in a research project will be taken by curriculum staff. They are encouraged to develop and lead research projects that individual students can contribute to, always acknowledging their contribution.

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<sup>10</sup> Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2009) *Developing undergraduate research and inquiry*. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256208546\\_Developing\\_Undergraduate\\_Research\\_and\\_Inquiry](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256208546_Developing_Undergraduate_Research_and_Inquiry) <sup>12</sup> Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2009) *Developing undergraduate research and inquiry*. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256208546\\_Developing\\_Undergraduate\\_Research\\_and\\_Inquiry](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256208546_Developing_Undergraduate_Research_and_Inquiry)

## 8. Academic Offences in Student Research

8.1.1. UCS is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity and ethics in relation to students' secondary and/or primary research and any other academic work and assessment they are carrying out. Primary research is to be carried out in an atmosphere free of any prejudice and/or harassment to research participants.

8.1.2. Below is a list of examples and definitions of academic misconduct in primary and/or secondary research, which are further informed by the UCS Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy<sup>11</sup>.

### 8.2. Examples of Academic Misconduct in Research

- **Plagiarism:** representing another person's work or ideas as one's own, for example, by failing to follow approved UCS convention in acknowledging sources such as the use of quotation marks or appropriate paraphrasing, etc. It generally refers to

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misappropriation of ideas, theories and works of others, or stealing somebody else's intellectual property and passing it off as your own.

- **Self-plagiarism:** where a student uses their own ideas, data, words or material previously produced and submitted for formal assessment at UCS, another academic institution or for publication (unless permitted by the assessment).<sup>12</sup>
- **Collusion:** cooperation in order to gain an unpermitted advantage. This may occur where students have consciously colluded on a piece of work, in part or whole, and passed it off as their own individual efforts, or where one student has authorised another student to use their work, in part or whole, and to submit it as their own.

Note: legitimate input from curriculum staff as part of research and/or when students are involved as partners in research may be authorised.

- **Essay mills/contract cheating:** the commissioning, purchase and submission of a piece of work, in part or whole, as the student's own. It is academic dishonesty to obtain academic work through illegal third-party involvement. This also refers to the use of AI to create or partially create aspects of research or any part of the resulting report/output and putting it across as your own work.
- **Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations in carrying out research:** This includes failure to follow agreed protocols if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, animals or the environment, and facilitating of misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. It includes any plan or conspiracy to attempt to do any of these things.<sup>13</sup> In terms of research, this includes

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<sup>11</sup> UCS (2022) *Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy*. UCS website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

<sup>12</sup> University of Cambridge (2019) *Plagiarism and academic misconduct: definition of academic misconduct*. Available at: <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/definition>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

the creation of false data or other aspects of research, including documentation and gatekeepers' or research participants' consent<sup>14</sup>.

- **Fabrication:** This includes the creation of false data or other aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent<sup>15</sup>.

- **Falsification:** This includes the inappropriate manipulation and/or selection of data, imagery and/or research participants' and gatekeepers' consents<sup>16</sup>.

- **Misrepresentation:** This includes misrepresentation of data, for example suppression or concealment of relevant findings and/or data, or knowingly, recklessly or by negligence, presenting a flawed interpretation of data<sup>17</sup>.

- **Mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data and/or primary materials.** This involves failure to keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained; failure to hold records securely on paper or

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electronic forms<sup>18</sup> in line with the UCS IT Policy; failure to secure primary research data in line with UCS policies and procedures and relevant legislation (Data Protection and GDPR).

8.2.1. The UK Research Councils require all Higher Education Institutions to demonstrate that there are agreed policies and procedures in place to deal with allegations of misconduct in research. Any allegations of misconduct in students' research at UCS can result in a disciplinary procedure in line with the HE Academic Misconduct Policy<sup>19</sup>. Students applying to undertake research must familiarise themselves with Data Protection and GDPR requirements, discuss this with their tutor and attend any relevant lessons.

## 9. Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT

9.1.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) is defined as 'systems that are capable to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings such as learning, judgment, and decision

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<sup>14</sup> University of Wolverhampton (2022) *Research misconduct A: definitions of misconduct in research*. <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/research/research-policies-procedures--guidelines/ethics-guidance/researchmisconduct/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> UCS (2022) *Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy*. UCS website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

making'<sup>20</sup>. This development has led to the creation of intelligent chatbots and virtual assistants that are capable of producing human-like language.

9.1.2 ChatGPT is defined as 'Chat-Generative Pre-Trained Transformer' and is one of the chatbots based on the Open AI language model.

9.1.3 UCS expects students to submit work and ideas that they have produced themselves, in line with the guidance set out in the Academic Misconduct Policy. Clear citations/references should be used where appropriate. The use of AI in education and research is an evolving situation but the principles of research ethics remain.

9.1.4 UCS has systems in place to detect any student work that has been written with the use of AI and chatbots for assessment purposes. A disciplinary hearing may be held in line with the Academic Misconduct Policy guidelines.

## 10. Student Research Involving Human Subjects

10.1.1. In all student research projects involving human subjects, the human subjects must be protected to ensure their dignity, safety, inclusivity, and well-being. No research undertaken should cause harm or distress to participants, researchers or other persons directly or indirectly involved in the research. Participants should be free from coercion or undue enticement while taking part in a research project.

### 10.2. Duty of Care to Research Participants

10.2.1. Students involved in approved primary research projects must ensure that they do not breach the duty of care to research participants. They must:

- Preserve the identity, anonymity and confidentiality of their research participants in line with Data Protection and GDPR;
- Ensure that research participants are not placed in any danger as part of the research project and that their health and safety and safeguarding is not undermined.
- Ensure that all appropriate gatekeepers' and research participants' informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently.
- Observe legal and reasonable ethical requirements or obligations of care for animal subjects, or protection of the environment.
- Seek relevant consent prior to the start of the primary research project<sup>21</sup>, i.e. from the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee.

10.2.2. Participants and their gatekeepers (if relevant) have the right to make free and informed decisions about their consent to participate in a research project. They should not be pressured to take part. Research participants should sign a consent form if they agree to take part in a research project, so that there is written proof of each participant's consent to take part in a study. This consent includes having an understanding, in an appropriate language and level, of what they are being asked to do and why, and the potential benefits to them.

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<sup>20</sup> Xu, L. D. (2021) 'Embedding blockchain technology into IoT for security: a survey', *IEEE Internet of Things Journal*, 8(13), pp. 10452–10473. <https://doi.org/10.1109/JIOT.2021.3060508>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

10.2.3. Honesty should be central to the relationship between researcher, participant, gatekeeper and relevant institutional representatives. Participants can be free to withdraw from the study at any time, without providing reasons and without any repercussions to them. Valid consent is when it meets three key conditions:

- A research participant has capacity to make a decision.
- The research process is free from coercion.
- The consent is informed<sup>22</sup>.

### **10.3. Consent and Ongoing Consent**

10.3.1 Consent is required from all participants in a research project as explained in section 9.2 above. When carrying out surveys, it is usual to include the participant information (or link to this) and agreement to consent to surveys in the preliminary text at the start of a survey, with wording that consent is given by starting the survey. Also, wording to explain how to withdraw either by closing the survey during completion or taking the reference number and contacting the given contact responsible for the survey of the wish to withdraw. This is more active than 'implied' consent.

10.3.2 In public spaces it is still advisable to make yourself and your purposes visible with opportunity to be asked questions and not to be included. This is true for online as well as face to face spaces, e.g. social media.

10.3.3 It is possible to collect (as ongoing consent) recordings of non-written consent of participants being given information about what would be involved in the research project and hearing their consent on audio. This is really useful when in later stages of research, such as interviews or focus groups following a survey to offer confidence that there is ongoing consent.

### **10.4. Assent versus Consent**

10.4.1. There might be special circumstances where the researcher might gain **assent** not necessarily as written (for example this might be more appropriate for younger participants, those considered vulnerable and/or those with limited literacy) alongside the formal **consent** by those who are responsible legally for young and vulnerable participants.

### **10.5. Access to Gatekeepers**

10.5.1. Certain research projects involving human subjects may require access to a gatekeeper. Gatekeepers' role is to prevent harm and protect potential research participants who are in their care. Any student researchers requiring access to research participants via gatekeepers will need to engage with gatekeepers early in the process and pending approval by the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee.

10.5.2. Research participants and gatekeepers (if applicable) should be provided with a detailed research information sheet and a consent form. The research information sheet should provide detailed information about the research project.

10.5.3. If children are involved in a research project, then gatekeepers, parents or other legal guardians must be informed and may be required to give their consent.

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<sup>22</sup> UK Research and Innovation (2023) *Key terms glossary*. Available at: (<https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/useful-resources/keyterms-glossary/>)

10.5.4. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained as a core ethical principle. Students must adhere to GDPR and Data Protection laws when collating primary research data. Research participants' personal data must be anonymised. Participants should be given information about how long their data will be kept and/or when it will be destroyed<sup>23</sup>.

10.5.5. Relevant policies and procedures must be followed for a research project taking place in an educational setting, such as nurseries, schools, colleges, etc. Students must comply with the Health and Safety regulations of participants, gatekeepers, fellow student researchers and other relevant parties involved in a research project.

10.5.6. Students are required to complete the Research Proposal Form and Ethical Proposal Form (see Appendices A and B).

**10.5.7.** Students should consider carefully the sample size and any conclusions published from research in terms of the confidence or implied confidence drawn from projects when drawing conclusions or trends. They should carefully consider the fact that a small anonymised sample can still lead to identification of research participants. Thorough consideration needs to be taken to protect research participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

## **11. Student Research Involving Animals and Environmental Projects**

11.1.1. Students undertaking research projects in animal management, wildlife conservation and environmental projects are required to submit research project proposal and ethical clearance forms.

11.1.2. BTC/UCS is committed to the highest ethical standards of animal care and treatment in research involving animal subjects. BTC/UCS is not involved in animal research involving scientific/medical/invasive procedures or the use of animal tissue.

### **11.2. Types of Animal Research at BTC/UCS**

11.2.1. Students research involving animal subjects at BTC/UCS may occur in the following types of studies:

- Understanding animal behaviour and any ecological impact
- Observational studies
- Conservation of species
- Population management/surveying animal population
- Microbiology research (observing bacteria in an animal)
- Animal husbandry, including care and grooming, livestock farming, accommodation and hygiene.

11.2.2. Any research that involves the observation and handling of an animal must be shown to adhere to animal welfare legislation such as *The Animals (Scientific*

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<sup>23</sup> Open University (2020) *Informed consent*. Available at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/governance/ethics/human/consent> (Accessed: 19 January 2020).

*Procedures) Act 1986*<sup>24</sup>. This code of practice sets out procedures in relation to good practice in research involving animal subjects to ensure that animals are treated with the highest level of care and that a project does not disturb their habitat or potentially cause the animal pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. Any research involving partner universities, external organisations (e.g. zoos), may also require ethical clearance from their Ethics Committees.

### **11.3. Ethical Research Principles Involving Animals**

11.3.1. All HE students applying to undertake a research project involving animal subjects must adhere to the following ethics principles:

- Research involving animals must be planned ethically, with the welfare of animals in mind, including the protection of the environment in which they live.
- Students must receive the appropriate ethical approval from their Curriculum Area Ethics Committee to ensure that their project will comply with appropriate animal welfare and environmental legislation.
- Animals must not be subjected to any harm or discomfort or otherwise compromise the welfare of the animal subjects.
- Animals must be cared for with the highest standards of husbandry.
- For observational studies and/or conservation work in the animals' natural habitat, care must be taken not to damage their environment or distress animals. Where applicable, official permits and ethics clearance must be sought from other relevant bodies prior to animals being disturbed.
- Students involved in the care and handling of animals must be properly trained and fully aware of relevant animal welfare legislation, regulations and good practice guidelines.
- Students must comply with the Health and Safety regulations of animal subjects, fellow researchers and other relevant parties involved in a research project.
- Non-animal techniques must be used in any BTC/UCS arts-based research projects.

11.3.2. When completing the ethical clearance form, students will be required to answer and provide further information on:

- Does the research potentially affect any of the five animal welfare needs: need for a suitable environment; need for a suitable diet; need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour pattern; need to be housed with or apart from other animals; need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease?
- Does the research involve the removal of biological material directly from the animal?
- Does the research involve manipulating the animal's environment that is not part of standard husbandry practices at the site? Consider the physical enclosure environment, and/or other stimulation of the species (e.g. sensory)?
- Will the research involve animals that are pregnant or raising offspring?
- Does the research study involve the handling of animals?
- Does the research involve invertebrates?

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<sup>24</sup> *Animals and Scientific Procedures Act (1986)* Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14>

11.3.3. Research involving the environment requires students to comply with relevant legislation, the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*<sup>25</sup>, and complete an ethical clearance form providing information on the following aspects of their research proposal:

- Does the study involve 'wild' animals and/or their habitats?
- Does the research involve the intentional killing, injuring or capturing of animals?
- Does this research involve the possession or control of live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives?
- Does this research involve damage to, destruction of, or obstruction of access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection?
- Does this research involve the disturbance of animals occupying such a structure or place?
- Does this research involve selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives?
- If the research involves an area of habitat including 'legally protected' habitats, has landowners/organisational/legal permission been granted?

11.3.4. Students must provide supporting evidence to supplement information provided in the ethical clearance form in support of ethical considerations as part of their project proposal. They are required to outline the proposed methods of research in relation to ethical considerations for any animal subjects involved.

11.3.5. For any queries relating to their research project students must refer to their project supervisor in the first instance. Curriculum staff who are supervising students with research projects will be members of a professional organisation in their subject discipline and/or will be aware of good practice and guidelines in conducting research with human participants and/or animal subjects.

11.3.6. This policy is further informed by the UCS Research Ethics Policy.

## 12. Review of Policy

12.1.1. This policy will be reviewed at the date stated on the front by the SMT Policy Review Group prior to sign-off by SMT and within three years of the last review. Amendments to

UCS HE policies are also reported to the Senate that oversees HE at University Centre Somerset, part of Bridgwater & Taunton College. Policies that involve students on courses validated by The Open University are also submitted to The OU in line with the academic agreement between BTC and The OU.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* Available at: <http://www.naturenet.net/law/index.html>

# 13. Appendices

## Appendix A: Student Research Proposal Form

Research Proposal Form

This checklist should be completed for every research project which involves human participants.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University Centre Somerset (UCS) Student Research Ethics Policy, available on the UCS website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](http://www.ucs.somerset.ac.uk), particularly the section on involving Human Subjects and any guidelines provided by academic or professional associations.

Students should submit this form to their Curriculum Area Research Committee along with a copy of the relevant participant information sheet(s).

<b>PERSONAL DETAILS</b>
Student Name:
E-mail address:
Contact Address:
Telephone Number:

<b>PROPOSED SUPERVISER/MODULE LEAD</b>
Name:
Email address:

I confirm that I have worked with this student in developing their research proposal and I am happy to act as supervisor.

Signed:

Date:

## RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Title of Dissertation:

What is the overall aim and what are the main research questions or objectives?

Present a brief review of key literature

Describe the research design/Methodology (experimental, quasi-experimental, action research, Exploratory, Ethnography, Phenomenology, Critical Theory etc.)

Methods of data collection:

Please outline in detail how data will be collected and **attach a copy of any questionnaires, interview schedules or observation guidelines** to be used.

Recruitment of participants:

Please outline the number of participants involved; give details of how potential participants will be identified and invited to take part in the study; and how informed consent will be obtained.

**Please attach a copy of your information sheet(s), Gatekeeper letters, Consent forms, draft materials such as interview questions etc. and consent form.**

Any significant change in the research question, design or conduct over the course of the research project should be notified to the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee and may require a new application for approval.

NOTE: All material submitted with a Research proposal application is treated confidentially. Any concerns about this should be raised with the Curriculum Area Ethics Committee.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal investigator/Student      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Student Ethical Proposal Form

<b>APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF RESEARCH</b>	
<b>ALL PARTS OF THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL IN ORDER TO GAIN APPROVAL</b>	
<b>Title of Research:</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Researcher (s):</b>  Name, email and telephone number:  <i>Please indicate department of each named individual, including collaborators external to the College/UCS.</i>  <i>*Note: Lead researchers are responsible for ensuring that all staff employed on projects (including research assistants, technicians and admin staff) act in accordance with the UCS's ethical principles, the design of the research described in this proposal and any conditions attached to its approval. Please refer to the UCS Student Research Ethics Policy <a href="http://someset.ac.uk">UCS (someset.ac.uk)</a> for further guidance.</i>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Aims and Objectives of Research Project:</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Brief Description of Research Methods and Procedures:</b>  <i>Specify research subject populations and recruitment methods. Please indicate any ethically sensitive aspects of the methods. Continue on attached sheets if required.</i>

<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Ethical Protocol – Research Involving Human Subjects:</b>          If your research project involves human subjects, please indicate how you will ensure it conforms to UCS’s Student Research Ethics Policy, particularly the section relating to Human Subjects.</p> <p>Does your research involve any of the following? (please tick as appropriate):          Research involving vulnerable people YES/NO          Research involving sensitive issues YES/NO          Research involving sensitive/confidential information YES/NO          Permission of a gatekeeper YES/NO          Research involving invasive interventions YES/NO          Dependent relationship between a researcher and participant YES/NO          Research involving health and safety concerns YES/NO          Research involving external organisations YES/NO          Other (please indicate)</p>
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	<p><b>If your project involves human subjects, please attach a statement below which addresses each of the main ethical principles:</b></p>
5.1	<p>Researchers will seek informed consent from research participants and/or gatekeepers (<b>Informed Consent</b>)</p>
5.2	<p>The rights of any human subjects involved in a research project will be protected to ensure their dignity, safety, inclusivity and well-being (<b>Protection from harm</b>)</p>
5.3	<p>If third parties are affected by research, informal consent will be sought from them</p>
5.4	<p>The consent of vulnerable and/or dependent participants or their representatives will be sought by researchers (<b>Openness and Honesty, Right to withdraw, Debriefing</b>)</p>
5.5	<p>Ethical clearance will be sought from external organisations with a published code of practice and ethical guidelines (e.g. Health and Safety Commission), if relevant</p>
5.6	<p>Researchers will comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 (with particular reference to <b>confidentiality</b>, privacy, anonymity and data security)</p>

5.7	Researchers will comply with the Health and Safety regulations of both researchers, participants and other relevant parties.		
<b>6</b>	<b>Ethical Protocol – Research Involving Animal Subjects:</b> If your research project involves animal subjects, please indicate how you will ensure that it conforms to UCS's Student Research Ethics Policy <a href="http://UCS.somerset.ac.uk">UCS (somerset.ac.uk)</a> particularly the section relating to Animal Subjects. <b>(IF NOT APPLICABLE LEAVE BLANK)</b>		
6.1	Researchers are fully trained in the care and handling of animal subjects and will comply with animal welfare legislation, regulations and good research practice guidelines		
6.2	Researchers will ensure animal welfare, including the protection of the environment in which they live		
6.3	Animals will not be subjected to any harm or discomfort during the research project		
6.4	The highest standards of husbandry will be applied for relevant projects		
6.5	Official permits and ethical clearance will be sought from external organisations - if relevant		
6.6	Non-animal techniques will be used in any UCS arts-based research projects – if relevant		
6.7	Researchers will comply with the Health and Safety regulations of animal subjects, fellow researchers and other relevant parties involved in a research project		
<b>7.</b>	<b>Declaration*:</b> To the best of our knowledge and belief, this research conforms to the ethical principles laid down by University Centre Somerset and external organisations / professional bodies		
	<b>Name</b>	<b>E-mail (s)</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Researcher (s):		
	Other Research Collaborators:		



**Appendix C: Example of Student Research Proposal Form for Animal Management, Wildlife Conservation, Ecology and Environmental Research**

Research Project: Research Proposal Form

<b>Investigator:</b>
<b>Title of Research Project:</b>
<b>Study location:</b>
<b>Additional named research partners/organisations:</b>
<b>Aims and Objectives of Study.</b>
<b>Hypotheses and/or predictions.</b>

**Background and Rationale of Project:**

**Methods (include information on any procedures involved)**

**Ethical review submitted with this proposal? Yes / No**

**What is the impact of the research?**

**Guidance (remove red text when section finished)**

**Impact** is defined as the effects that the research has beyond academia, e.g. how it contributes to, benefits and influences society, culture, the environment and the economy. This includes potential benefits e.g. to captive husbandry/breeding, behaviour, conservation, animal welfare.

**Reference List.**

**Proposed Start Date:**

**Expected Duration:**

**Equipment required:**

**Facilities required:**

**Appendix D: Example of Student Research Proposal Ethical Clearance Form for Animal Management, Ecology, Wildlife Conservation and Environmental Research**

<b>Part B. Ethical consideration for non-human participants</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>3. Does the research potentially affect any of the five animal welfare needs?  <b>If Yes</b>, indicate which needs below in 3a to e.  <b>In addition</b>, please outline in Section B how the need is impacted upon with the species under investigation and state how any negative effects will be minimised in the methodology</p>		
3a. Need for a suitable environment		
3b. Need for a suitable diet		
3c. Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour pattern		
3d. Need to be housed with or apart from other animals		
<p>3e. Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease  <i>Note: Under the terms of The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 "Pain, Suffering, distress and lasting harm", encompass any material disturbance to normal health (defined as the physical, mental and social well-being of the animal). They include disease, injury, and physiological or psychological discomfort, whether immediately (such as at the time of an injection), or in the longer term (such as the consequences of the application of a carcinogen).</i></p>		
<p>4. Does the research involve the removal of biological material directly from the animal?  <b>If yes</b>, please indicate what and why in Section B and state how this impacts the species within your methodology.</p>		
<p>5. Does the research involve manipulating the animal's environment that is <b>not part</b> of standard husbandry practices at the site? Consider the physical enclosure environment, and/or other stimulation of the species (e.g. sensory)  <b>If yes</b>, please indicate what and why in Section B, plus any information from the methodology to reduce this effect</p>		
<p>6. Will the research involve animals that are pregnant or raising offspring?  <b>If yes</b>, please outline methodology in Section B along with information to reduce any effects on the pregnant animal.</p>		
<p>7. Does the research study involve handling of animals?  <b>If yes</b> answer 7a - c.  <b>If yes</b>, please indicate the extent and why the need for this in Section B, plus any information to reduce any adverse effects</p>		
7a. Have you been previously trained to handle these animals? <b>If no</b> , answer 7b.		
7b. When will you be trained to handle these animals?		

7c. If these animal are owned, has owner's permission been granted and documented? <i>Attach to this form</i>		
8. Does the research involve invertebrates? <i>If yes, please indicate the extent and methodology in Section B, plus any information to reduce any adverse effects on the invertebrates</i>		

### Ethical Registration Form.

<b>Researcher Name:</b>		
<b>Researcher Contact email:</b>		
<b>Supervisor Name:</b>		
<b>Research Title:</b>		
<b>Start/End Date of Study:</b>		
<b>Type of Research:</b>	<b>Research Project</b>	
	<b>Dissertation</b>	
	<b>Staff Research</b>	

**Section A. Consider the following statements in Part A, B and C in relation to your research methodology.  
If any questions answered YES please provide further information in Section B of this form.**

<b>Part A. Ethical consideration for human participants</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Does the study involve the disclosure of potentially sensitive information including but not limited to: personal history, religious status, and personal moral and ethical opinion, disclosure of health status? <b>If yes</b> , answer 1a and provide further information in Section B.		
1a. Does the study provide the opportunity for participants to remain anonymous?		
2. Will the study involve individuals under the age of 18? <b>If yes</b> , answer 2a and provide further information in Section B.		
2a. Can access to the individuals be confirmed with the correct safeguarding and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) paperwork?		

<b>Part C. Ethical consideration for environmental research.</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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<p>9. Does the study involve 'wild' animals and/or their habitats? <b>If yes to question 9, please answer 9a to e. If yes to 9a to e then outline the methodology in Section B and reflect how the research impacts upon the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.</b>  For further information on the Wildlife and Countryside Act refer to:  <a href="http://www.naturenet.net/law/index.html">http://www.naturenet.net/law/index.html</a></p>		
<p>9a. Does the research involve the intentional killing, injuring or capturing of animals</p>		
<p>9b. Does this research involve the possession or control of live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives?</p>		
<p>9c. Does this research involve damage to, destruction of, or obstruction of access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection?</p>		
<p>9d. Does this research involve disturbance of animals occupying such a structure or place?</p>		
<p>9e. Does this research involve selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives</p>		
<p>10. If the research involves an area of habitat including 'legally protected' habitats, has landowners/organisational/legal permission been granted? <i>Attach to this form.</i></p>		

**Section B. Supporting evidence in support of ethical considerations. Outline proposed methods of research in relation to ethical considerations for any animal and/or human subjects used.**

