

Code of Practice on Research Ethics

The University is committed to supporting good practice in research and scholarly activity; it considers it to be fundamental that research should be conducted in accordance with ethical principles. This document defines the scope of the University's Code of Practice on Research Ethics, sets out the guiding principles, and outlines the obligations and responsibilities for conducting research in an ethical manner. This document is part of the University's framework for supporting good practice in research which includes the following information:

- UAL Code of Practice on Research Ethics (this document)
- UAL Guidance for Research Ethics Approval
- Constitution and terms of reference for UAL Research Standards and Development Committee and Research Ethics Sub-Committee
- UAL Health and Safety policy
- UAL Equality and Diversity Framework
- UAL Disciplinary Code

1. Definition of Research

- 1.1 For the purposes of this Code of Practice, research is defined as any form of systematic, critical and/or creative enquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge. It includes scholarly activity which analyses, synthesises and provides interpretations of ideas and information with the aim of contributing to the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines.

2. Applicability of the Code of Practice

- 2.1 This Code applies to all research undertaken under the formal auspices of the University. It applies to all research associated with the University irrespective of the source of funding or the physical location of the work. It applies to research carried out by staff and students in the course of their duties and relations with the University. Work conducted as part of professional practice carried out beyond the academy is the responsibility of the practitioner.
- 2.2 The Code applies to pedagogic enquiry and interventions which are beyond the normal agreements for educational purposes between teacher, student and institution.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The guiding principles of this Code are **respect for persons**, **justice**, and **beneficence**; these constitute a systematic regard for the rights and interests of others in the full range of research relationships and activities.
- 3.2 **Respect for persons** recognises the capacity and rights of all individuals to make their own choices and decisions. It refers to the autonomy and rights to self-determination of all human beings, acknowledges their dignity, freedom and rights. An important component of this principle is the need to provide special protection to vulnerable persons.
- 3.3 The principle of **justice** obliges the researcher to distribute equally the risks and benefits of participation in research. Any risks to persons participating in research must be weighed against any potential benefits – to the participants or the researchers, and also the wider benefits to society of the knowledge gained. As with the principle of respect for persons, there is a need to protect vulnerable groups.
- 3.4 **Beneficence** is the principle of doing good in the widest sense. It requires researchers to serve the interests and well-being of others. In so doing, researchers comply with the principle of neither doing, nor permitting, any foreseeable harm as a consequence of research activities. This is the principle of **non-maleficence**, it is the principle of doing no harm in the widest sense.

4. Obligations and Responsibilities

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of researchers to conduct their research in line with the **guiding principles** set out above. Compliance implies giving due consideration to the ethical dimensions of any research undertaking, and this, in turn, implies that the researcher undertakes an **assessment of risk** in relation to these guiding principles. The University provides guidance on the assessment of risk in the UAL Guidance for Research Ethics Approval.
- 4.2 Researchers are responsible for ensuring they are familiar with the University's procedures for scrutinising, approving and monitoring research activity and for complying with them.
- 4.3 Researchers are expected to maintain the highest standards of **academic integrity** in conducting, publishing or exhibiting the outcomes of their research. This includes formally acknowledging the contributions and assistance of others, collaborating partners, honouring contractual agreements, copyrights, and the ownership of intellectual property and avoidance of any practice likely to mislead as to the origin, validity, novelty or ownership of what is presented.
- 4.4 Researchers must consider other rules of conduct that may apply to their research and ensure compliance. For example particular **codes of practice and rules of engagement** apply to work in archives, museums and galleries. Work in hospitals and other medical institutions requires proposals for research to be approved by an ethics committee approved by the Department of Health.
- 4.5 Research undertaken at UAL draws on a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Researchers are expected to comply with the **standards of professional practice**, the disciplinary understandings, the ethical frameworks and guidelines which apply to the work being carried out, for example as a consequence of the methods employed, the expectations of the funding body, or as a result of the researcher's affiliation with a subject association or professional body.
- 4.6 In research involving active participants, in order to realise the guiding principles, several specific requirements are essential. The prior **informed consent** of a potential participant, and the requirements for this consent to be legally valid are set out in the UAL Guidance for Research Ethics Approval.
- 4.7 Where research gathers information from individual persons from which they can be identified, there is an obligation for the researcher to respect the person's **privacy**, rights to **confidentiality** and if the information is recorded in any medium as data the researcher must address **data protection** and comply with the Data Protection Act. Issues of confidentiality and privacy are distinct from each other and from data protection. Researchers are responsible for considering each of these in their assessment of the ethical dimensions of their research.
- 4.8 Researchers must acquaint themselves with **legislation** that is relevant to their research. Among the laws with general requirements are the Data Protection Act, the Equality Act, the Computer Misuse Act, the Obscene Publications Act, and legislation regarding working with participants unable to give informed consent, safeguarding children, the welfare of animals, uses of human tissue, and regulations about health and safety.
- 4.9 **Contractual arrangements** about the publication, dissemination, and exploitation of research including any non-disclosure agreements and intellectual property rights must be clearly set out prior to the conduct of the research.
- 4.10 The **independence of research** must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicitly declared.