



KMS122

Research Ethics Policy

Policy Statement:

University Centre Kingston Maurward (UCKM) is committed to carrying out all its activities including teaching, innovation, enterprise and research, within a comprehensive ethical framework (KMS121 UCKM Ethics Framework).

This includes all forms of research activity at UCKM as part of Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College (WKMC).

This Research Ethics Policy draws attention to the responsibilities and values relevant to research. These principles encourage all involved in research to consider the wider consequences of their work and to engage critically with the practical, ethical and intellectual challenges that are inherent in the conduct of research.

The policy further identifies the procedure to be followed in seeking ethical approval for research projects. This is intended to be a relatively light touch process which will both ensure ethical integrity while supporting a culture of academic freedom and excellence. In this procedure proposals are subjected to a level of scrutiny that is in proportion to the risk of harm or adverse effect to participants, researchers, the College, UCKM and society as a whole.

Authority:

The Research Ethics Policy is approved by the Corporation of Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College in accordance with the Corporation's Standing Orders. It applies across all the academic activities of the College and University Centre.

Document Management, Approvals & Review:

Title	Research Ethics Policy	
Manager	Vice Principal Weymouth & Kingston Maurward College	
Approvals (Committee)	Approved by Higher Education Academic Board	
Approvals (Board)	Approved by Corporation	
Next Review Due	In three years	

Research Ethics Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 All activity at University Centre Kingston Maurward and Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College is based on transparent ethical standards. Ethics are universal behaviours and are integral to the formulation of all policy.
- 1.2 The underlying ethical framework is set out in the UCKM / WKMC **Ethics Framework Policy** (KMS121). The purpose of this document is to apply those principles to research activity at UCKM / WKMC.
- 1.3 Those undertaking research activities at UCKM / WKMC should adhere to the ethical principles set out in the Ethics Framework (KM121) and re-iterated here. Both draw attention to the responsibilities and values relevant to research. While some elements may seem self-evident, and there is some overlap, these principles aim to encourage all involved in research to consider the wider consequences of their work and to engage critically with the practical, legal, ethical and intellectual challenges that are inherent in the conduct of high-quality research.
- 1.4 All research will have due regard to UCKM / WKMC policies relating to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. These set out a vision of UCKM / WKMC as a place where everyone feels respected, valued and supported to achieve excellence. This commitment exists alongside our legal and moral obligations to provide an inclusive environment for our colleagues, students and members of the public who may be affected by our activities
- 1.5 This document identifies the procedure to be followed in seeking ethical approval for research projects.
- 1.6 It is intended to be a relatively light touch process which will both ensure ethical integrity while fully supporting a culture of academic freedom and excellence.

Scope

- 1.7 This policy applies to all UCKM / WKMC employees and students engaged in research, and other individuals who are undertaking research using College premises or facilities and/or in the College's name.

Benchmarking and Alignment

- 1.8 All research practice outlined here is benchmarked against and aligned with:
 - The Universities Concordat to support research integrity (2019)
 - The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) – Code of Practice for Research

Context

- 1.9 University Centre Kingston Maurward is the Higher Education centre located within Kingston Maurward Campus of Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College. The volume of research currently conducted is relatively limited but there is a commitment to growth as resources permit and academic staff are actively encouraged to undertake scholarly activity and research as part of their continuous development programme.
- 1.10 Higher Education Students are introduced to research methodologies and tools at each level of their degree programme. There are requirements for some HE students to undertake an element of original research as part of their studies, at either Level 5 for Foundation Degrees and HNDs, or Level 6 for Bachelors Honours Top Up programmes.

2 The Rationale for an Ethical Approval System

- 2.1 The recognition that research should be subject to ethical scrutiny has led to the development of a broad concordance of approaches to research ethics in Britain and Europe. All UK Higher Education institutions now have ethical approval systems. The purpose of such systems is positive and is intended to:
- Reflect a commitment to good ethical practice, as a principle in itself and as a means of maintaining public confidence in the work of staff and students of the HE Institution.
 - Assist researchers, supervisors and students doing research to identify appropriate issues and to address these in the structuring of research proposals.
 - Act as a safeguard to researchers, supervisors and students who can be confident of the ethical propriety of their project once it has been approved.

3 Research Defined

- 3.1 Research is a form of disciplined enquiry which aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory. This does not normally extend to general coursework assignments, but does apply to undergraduate dissertations or projects.
- 3.2 Research ethics are the moral principles guiding the planning and conduct of research, the publication of outcomes, and post-project care and/or disposal of records or materials.
- 3.3 This definition applies to all research projects within the UCKM and WKMC.
- 3.4 Within the broad field of research there are two areas of particular ethical concern:

Research with Human Participants

- 3.5 Research with human participants should be taken in its broadest possible sense and includes questionnaires, observations and the use of materials derived from human participants as well as invasive or intrusive procedures. While the latter are legally controlled (and extremely unlikely to be contemplated in the UCKM / WKMC setting) a variety of broader interactions with individuals or communities will be commonplace.
- 3.6 The key issue is that those individuals participating in the research study do so voluntarily (free from coercion) and give **informed consent** – that is to say they are aware of the purpose of the study, understand the way in which the data will be gathered, stored and analysed. They should also be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time should they decide that they do not wish to participate.
- 3.7 This applies even where the data has been generated for another purpose. For example, the re-use of already collected data may require ethical approval due to its sensitive nature or if individuals can potentially be identified from it. In such cases it may be necessary to seek additional informed consent from prior participants.
- 3.8 It is essential that the interests of research participants (and those of the researchers themselves) should be considered at all stages of the research projects. In particular the following should be observed, where appropriate to the project and in line with learned society practice:
- Participants should be no worse off as a result of their participation in the project;
 - The interests of children, vulnerable adults and other vulnerable groups should be given specific consideration;
 - Participants should not be subjected to undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment or other harm.
- 3.9 It is assumed that if any proposed study meets the definition of research and potentially raises any ethical issues with personal, social, physical or environmental implications, ethical approval will be needed.

Research with Animals

- 3.10 Research with Animals has potential welfare impacts, and may include legislative restrictions. In consequence all animal research will require ethical approval and detailed supervisory oversight.
- 3.11 Some research practices with animals is strongly controlled and any active intervention, drug trial or procedure will require legal approval (usually in the form of licence). See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/research-and-testing-using-animals>
- 3.12 Restrictions on animal research allow research projects with animals to include non-invasive observational studies and non-lethal sampling

techniques without licencing. However, licencing for specific species will need to be given consideration as well as the value of research methods that may cause disturbance of manipulate behaviour

- 3.13 Projects involving the College animal collection or wider estate will need the authorisation of relevant staff with responsibility for these areas of the College e.g. Deputy Head Animal welfare Science (Collections) or Farm Manager.
- 3.14 Projects may include the use of other site or resources e.g. animal collections. Permissions must be sought from relevant bodies/ owners and protocols agreed as to the purpose and activities to be conducted within the research outcomes.

4 Ethical Research Principles

- 4.1 Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, value and quality. The results of research should benefit society either directly or by generally improving human knowledge and understanding.
- 4.2 Researchers must ensure their proposed research projects follow the ethical guidance of the UK Research Integrity Office and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. These are outlined below.
- 4.3 Researchers should also incorporate the specific guidance of the learned society(ies) recognised within their subject areas.

Principle 1: Excellence

- 4.4 Researchers should ensure that the research methodology is appropriate. Research designs should be such as to maximise a project's utility and relevance for the benefit of society.

Principle 2: Honesty

- 4.5 It is foundational that all aspects of the work must be carried out with honesty. All reporting must reflect actual occurrences and outcomes.
- 4.6 Honesty also extends to human participants where present and they should be fully informed about the purpose, methods, and intended possible use of the research.

Principle 3: Integrity

- 4.7 The independence of the research outcomes must be ensured. External sources of funding and any potential conflict of interest must be declared during the approval process.

Principle 4: Cooperation

- 4.8 The research culture will be characterised by respect for all groups in society, in line with the University's Equality Policy and national legislation on Equality, Diversity and Human Rights.

Principle 5: Accountability

- 4.9 Research must be transparent and those undertaking the work clearly identified and accountable for their actions.
- 4.10 To that end all research outcomes should be disseminated in a manner which makes them accessible to the widest possible audience.
- 4.11 Research projects with human participants should aim to avoid harm in general to groups and individuals. Risk assessment appropriate to each research project will be undertaken.

Principle 6: Training and Skills

- 4.12 Those undertaking the research must have sufficient training to be able to undertake the research without any form of harm to the subjects, participants or to themselves.
- 4.13 The Research Panel should consider if the proposed researcher has sufficient training for the research they propose. Where the research is proposed by a senior staff member consideration should be given to consulting with an external assessor.
- 4.14 It is acknowledged that where the project involves training in research methods a closer level of supervision will be required during the training period and that should be built into the supervisory arrangements.

Principle 7: Care, Safety and Respect

- 4.15 Researchers should work to ensure that, throughout the lifecycle of their investigations, ethical considerations relating to their research projects are identified and managed. Ethical considerations should be interpreted broadly and may encompass areas where regulation and approval processes exist as well as areas where they do not. All appropriate licences, permissions and approvals must be in place before research starts and be updated as necessary if plans change.
- 4.16 The health and safety of both researcher and participants/subjects will be carefully considered in the design and execution of research projects.

5 Responsibilities

Legal Requirements

- 5.1 UCKM / WKMC requires that all research is conducted according to high ethical standards and is undertaken in full compliance with the legal requirements of the UK and the country in which the research is to take place.
- 5.2 This includes, when working on sensitive or extremism-related research, adherence to the revised 'Prevent Duty' guidance for Higher Education Institutions (England and Wales) (updated April 2021).

Statutory, Professional, Regulatory or Other Body Requirements

- 5.3 The University recognises that statutory, professional, regulatory or other bodies may have requirements which also need to be met before a research proposal may be approved.

Handling of Research Data

- 5.4 All research must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR), and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). All funded, contractual or collaborative research must comply with the specified requirements for data storage.
- 5.5 The confidentiality of information supplied by participants must be respected, except where the requirements of professional and learned society practice determine. Any limits to confidentiality must be explained to participants.
- 5.6 Issues of anonymity and anonymisation of results should be fully considered, and where personal disclosure or identification is likely, this must be discussed with the participants and their specific consent to this obtained.
- 5.7 All researchers (and for student research projects, the research supervisor) must take full responsibility for ensuring appropriate storage and security for all study information, including research data and consent forms. Students and staff must keep appropriately secure data records for the life of research projects and all researchers must include a statement on Data Management in their research proposal/ethical approval application.
- 5.8 Any researcher that wishes to retain data beyond the life of a research project (e.g. for future research use) must gain ethical approval, with the appropriate consents, to do this and must store the data in a form that complies with the Data Protection Act.

Information to Staff and Students

- 5.9 UCKM will ensure that staff and students are fully informed of the relevant research ethics requirements of the University Centre and College.
- 5.10 UCKM / WKMC ensures that its ethics and associated policies and procedures are embedded and understood throughout the organisation through internal and external communication.
- 5.11 Further, UCKM / WKMC recognises the importance of ongoing staff and student development in the field of research ethics, and will promote and facilitate this within UCKM / WKMC.
- 5.12 The Head of Higher Education and the Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring all employees receive appropriate training and for the communication of the University's Ethics Policy and other relevant policies to associated person(s).

Senior Staff and Research Panel Members

- 5.13 Senior Staff and Research Panel Members should set clear standards, encouraging and guiding good practice, and helping staff and others to perform at their best, this includes ethical considerations. Significant issues that are beyond the competence of individual members to determine should be referred to those responsible for specific policies and procedures.

Monitoring of Conduct of a Research Project

- 5.14 While it is important that ethical considerations are taken into account at the inception of a research project, it is also important that ethical considerations inform it throughout, up to and including the publication/dissemination of the research project. For taught course students the life of a project includes completion of all forms of assessment, including re-submission.
- 5.15 To that end UCKM / WKMC will undertake appropriate monitoring of approved research projects to ensure compliance with the project as approved. This will usually be undertaken by the research supervisor if the researcher is a student or by a nominated senior academic (usually a member of the review panel) if the researcher is a member of staff.
- 5.16 It is the researcher's responsibility to abide by the terms of the ethical approval given. If the need for further ethical approval becomes apparent as the project develops, it is the responsibility of the researcher to apply for that further approval.
- 5.17 Failure to comply with the terms of ethical approval for a research project, or failure to seek further approval if required, may lead to action for staff or students under the Policy & Procedures for Academic Misconduct.

Inappropriate activities in Research: Raising Concerns

- 5.18 In the interests of openness, good practice and the reputation of the University Centre and College, staff, students, and members of the public, are entitled to raise concerns about the correct ethical practices in research, and particularly in relation to compliance with research ethics.
- 5.19 In the first instance such concerns should be reported in writing (via email) by staff to their line manager or, if a student, to the Head of Higher Education. A response will usually be made within ten working days.
- 5.20 If the answer given is not satisfactory to the staff or student has the right to escalate the matter to the office of the Vice Principal.
- 5.21 Alternatively if the Staff or Student, for whatever reason, feels they are unable to do this then they can use the mechanisms set out in the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 5.22 It is expected that all concerns will be raised in good faith. Where this is the case, the person raising the concern(s) will be protected from reprisal or victimisation even if the concern is shown to be unfounded.

Ethical issues relating to Dissemination of Results

- 5.23 Researchers need to ensure that dissemination and/or publication follows good ethical practice. Researchers should seek advice locally and follow appropriate learned society guidelines.
- 5.24 Researchers have a responsibility to take account of all relevant evidence and present it without omission, misrepresentation or deception. Data and information must not knowingly be fabricated or manipulated in a way which might lead to distortion.
- 5.25 Work of other scholars or colleagues must be acknowledged. Professional standards need to be observed in: attribution of authorship; acknowledgement of sources; correctness of references.
- 5.26 Fair attribution of authorship in a collaborative research project should be observed, with seniority of position not creating an automatic right to co-authorship. Honorary authorship is unacceptable. The order of authors should recognise their respective contributions to the work.

6 Procedure for Ethical Review

- 6.1 All research at UCKM / WKMC is subject to a review procedure. This is intended to help focus the output and to ensure that ethical concerns have been addressed at each stage in the development, implementation and reporting of a project. It is intended to be a positive support for researchers not as a restriction.
- 6.2 In summary the key stages are:

	Key Stages	Oversight By
1	Proposal Discussion	Supervisor
2	Referral to Ethics Panel if ethical consideration is required	Programme Leader
3	Ethics Panel	Panel Membership: Supervisor, Programme leader Head of Higher Education Staff with relevant area of responsibility
4	Approval to Proceed with Study OR Modifications required to proceed Supervisor to inform student and agree modifications. Student can elect to no longer proceed with project and make a new proposal	Programme Leader/ Supervisor
5	Monitoring During Implementation of Project and Dissemination of Conclusions	Supervisor

Stage 1: Proposal

- 6.3 Those intending to undertake research will discuss their proposals with their supervisor and/ or Programme Leader. These initial discussions and verbal feedback are essential to firming up an idea into an initial proposal and discuss the viability or ambitions of project ideas.
- 6.4 The initial draft proposal in the form of an outline statement (circa 500 to 1000 words) is sent to their supervisor.

Stage 2: Referral to Ethics Panel

- 6.5 Discussion between the student and supervisor may identify potential areas of ethical concern or conflicts of interest in proposed methods or project aims that will require agreement and consideration by the ethics panel
- 6.6 Examples of areas of concern that would need referral are:
- Use of animals within the College collections in studies
 - Use of animals within the College farm or equine stock
 - Data collection using wild animals, particularly those that require handling or may lead to changes in behaviour
 - Sampling methods that require euthanasia or invasive procedures
 - Changes to wild habitats
 - Collection and use of personal data
 - Licencing
- 6.7 The Supervisor should refer the issue to the programme leader (or Head of Higher Education) for further consideration through ethics panel.

Stage 3: Ethics Panel

- 6.7 The panel will consider the validity of the proposal and either approve or suggest modifications to allow the project to proceed.

There three main outcomes:

1. Project can proceed as planned
2. Project can only proceed once modifications agreed with supervisor
3. Project is rejected as modification are not possible for project to meet outcomes

Stage 4: Outcomes and Modifications

- 6.8 The supervisor will circulate the proposal to a Research Ethics Panel. This usually includes the Head of Department and Head of Higher Education.
- 6.9 The panel will produce a short report on each application which will be sent to the applicant. This will usually take the form of an email.
- 6.11 Where the proposal requires significant amendments then the panel will ask the applicant to make changes and discuss and approve changes with their supervisor.

- 6.12 If student feel that the modifications proposed no longer meet their outcomes for the initial proposal, students will be supported by their supervisor to explore a new proposal.

Stage 5: Monitoring During Implementation of Project

- 6.13 During the implementation of the research the applicant will report on a regular basis with their supervisor who will have oversight of the methodological and ethical dimensions of the project. This oversight will continue to the reporting and dissemination phases.

7 Appeals

- 7.1 As noted above, if at any stage the application for ethical approval is likely to be rejected, this will normally be referred back to the applicant with the deficiencies of the application identified, and giving the applicant the opportunity of a further submission.
- 7.2 Where an application for ethical approval is not approved at supervisor or local level, the researcher has the opportunity to appeal to the Research Ethics Panel. The applicant and person(s) responsible for considering the application have the right to attend the meeting and speak to the issue.
- 7.3 Where an application for ethical approval is not approved by the Research Ethics Panel, the researcher has the opportunity to request to reconvene the Ethics Panel to attend the meeting and speak on the issue. The decision of the UCKM / WKMC Higher Education Board upon ethical matters is final and the matter is usually concluded at this point.
- 7.4 Notwithstanding, should a student deem that they have been subject to prejudicial behaviour, unfair treatment or that due process was not followed then they can appeal the decision on the grounds of maladministration via the wider [KMS900 Views and Complaints Policy](#).

Policy Ends.