

Bartlett Ethics Guidance

written by Dr David Roberts, 2018, and updated annually by Professor Jane Rendell, 2023.

Research Ethics

All UCL students and staff undertaking research involving living human participants, or data derived from living human participants, are responsible for ensuring that their research is conducted ethically. There are a number of ethical standards that have been accepted throughout the UK and abroad with which all researchers and ethical committees are expected to comply.

Principles

Informed consent: All participants must be fully informed of the study and what is being asked of them, including the potential risks/benefits and exclusion criteria, in order to make a fully informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research. This must be an active step on behalf of the participant and not due to any inducement, coercion or perceived pressure to participate. This is required of all participants in a research study, except where there is a justification for covert research or deception (such cases will be considered on an individual basis by the relevant ethics committee).

Benefit not harm: Research involving human participants must have a benefit to society and the risks involved to participants must be minimized, balanced against the potential benefit to the overall community, and clearly explained to participants before they give their consent.

Confidentiality: All participants have the right for their participation to remain confidential in that only the researcher will be aware who has participated. Generally all data will also be anonymous in the final report so that nothing can be attributed back to an individual participant. There are exceptions, for instance where participants wish to be identified or they cannot realistically have their identities kept confidential, but written informed consent must be obtained from the individual participant in advance. (Note: the definition of informed consent is contextual, and as a result rules on the form of consent vary, with exceptions arising from that contextuality. For example, it may be appropriate to gain consent orally as a part of a recording).

Procedures

UCL is reviewing the research ethics system and new structures, processes and guidelines. But for now, please consult current guidelines:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/policies/conduct/ethical-principles>

<https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

If you have any questions please consult your Course Director, Module Leader, Dissertation Supervisor, Project or Unit Tutor, or the relevant person in your school, for example a Director of Ethics.

Guidance

As a first step, we recommend consulting practisingethics.org, an open access project for built environment researchers and practitioners, designed and produced by David Roberts, and developed out of a collaboration between the Bartlett Ethics Commission and Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). practisingethics.org brings together a lexicon of ethical principles, guidelines on how to negotiate ethical issues in practice, reading lists of ethics publications, overviews of ethics protocols, and case studies including reflections on the hotspots, touchstones, blindspots and moonshots of ethical processes.

For specific information on UCL processes, please consult the extensive set of guidance notes prepared by UCL across a range of topics, issues and methods.

<https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/guidance.php>

Information sheets and consent forms: Information sheets and consent forms are strongly advised when conducting interviews or surveys to inform participants about the research in plain language and to receive informed consent for sharing data in verbal or signed form. The UCL research ethics website includes guidance for writing information sheets

<https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/advice.php>

Data protection: Please consult UCL guidance for researchers on GDPR procedures.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/data-protection/data-protection-guidance>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/data-protection/guidance-staff-students-and-researchers/research-and-data-protection>

Method and discipline-specific guidance: The methods, site and subjects of your built environment research each raise their own ethical considerations; eg, taking photographs of people as part of site-surveys or collecting data from apps and sensors may raise issues of anonymity. Collaboration with other researchers or research based in institutions may raise issues of permission, commercial sensitivity and authorship. Combining different data sets may inadvertently disclose personal data of individual citizens. Gaining written consent may not always be appropriate in certain contexts, for example if participants are illiterate or apprehensive about form-signing because of cultural reasons.

The UKRI also includes guidance on research methods and scenarios: asking questions of participants; literature reviews and systematic reviews; visual methods; online research; observation; international research; research with children; secondary analysis; practitioner research and dual roles; research led by service users; participatory approaches.

For specific advice, please consult guidelines produced by disciplinary bodies:

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) - Research Ethics

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

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

British Sociological Association - Guidelines on Ethical Research

https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

Social Research Association

<https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/Ethics/Research-ethics-guidance/SRA/Ethics/Research-Ethics-Guidance.aspx?hkey=5e809828-fb49-42be-a17e-c95d6cc72da1>

British Educational Research Association

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011>

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/anticipating-the-application-unintended-consequences-of-practitioner-research>

Wellcome Trust

Including Guidelines on good research practice, Policy on research involving human participants, and Research involving people in low- and middle-income countries

<https://wellcome.ac.uk/grant-funding/guidance/policy-and-position-statements>

For specific research methods:

Interviewing

See the Oral History Society's ethical guide

<https://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/>

Ethnographic and observational research

See the Association of Social Anthropologists' ethical guidelines for good research practice

<https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>

Participatory research and co-production

See the Just Space protocol for research collaboration with community/activist groups

<https://justspace2010.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/jsn-research-protocol-20110607.pdf>

The Centre for Social Justice and Community Action's community-based participatory research guide to ethical principles and practice

https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/cbpr_ethics_guide_web_november_2012.pdf

Ethical challenges of co-production: Imagine Project

<https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/good-research-resource-hub/research-co-production/ethical-challenges-of-co-production-imagine-project>

Research creating or combining large data sets

See the UK Data Archive guidance on creating and managing data

<https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/learning-hub/research-data-management/ethical-issues/ethical-obligations/>

The Office for National Statistics guidance on statistical disclosure control

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/datastrategy/datapolicies/statistical-disclosurecontrol>

Research on and about the internet

See the Association of Internet Research's ethical decision-making recommendations

<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>.

Exhibiting material

<https://www.icms-journal.com/articles/10.5334/icms.1021213/>

Visual Research Methods

Susan Cox, Sarah Drew, Marilys Guillemin, Catherine Howell, Deborah Warr, Jenny Waycott, *Guidelines for Ethical Visual Research Methods*

https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4434501/mod_resource/content/1/Ethical%20guidelines%20for%20visual%20ethnography.pdf

International Visual Sociology Association, *Code of Research Ethics*
https://visualsociology.org/?page_id=405

Diana Papademas & the International Visual Sociology Association (2009) 'IVSA Code of Research Ethics and Guidelines', *Visual Studies*, 24:3, 250-257, DOI:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14725860903309187>

Andrew Clark, Jon Prosser & Rose Wiles, (2010) 'Ethical issues in image-based research', *Arts & Health*, 2:1, 81-93, DOI: [10.1080/17533010903495298](https://doi.org/10.1080/17533010903495298)

Creative Practice

Valentina Desideri and Denise Ferreira da Silva, *The Sensing Salon*, a practice framed around a specific question: 'How to image an ethics without the subject'?
<https://www.thesensingsalon.org/about>

Idare (Innovation, Design, Art, Research, Ethics) Ethics Case Studies
<https://idare.vca.unimelb.edu.au/dare-case-studies/about-the-case-studies/>

Research on or with indigenous groups and cultural sensitivities:

For example:

<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/about/protocols-for-working-with-indigenous-artists/>

https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/San-Code-of-RESEARCH-Ethics-Booklet_English.pdf

<https://www.tropenbos.org/resources/publications/code+of+conduct+for+working+with+indigenou+s+and+local+communities>

Health and safety for site-based work:

<http://www.gsa.ac.uk/media/1024702/Artist-in-the-Public-Realm-Health-and-Safety.pdf>

Issues relating to precarious labour

<https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/ethicscode>