

Queen Mary Policy on Research with Human Participants

All research involving human participants must have ethical approval. The Ethics of Research Committee is responsible, under authority delegated by Senate, for approving the ethical standards of research involving human participants or materials derived from human participants. All such projects throughout Queen Mary should be submitted to the Committee for approval, except those research studies which fall within the remit of the NHS Research Ethics Committee, or other such recognised bodies.

Research must be conducted with honesty, integrity, and due care for the rights of participants and researchers. Ethical requirements include:

- That participants are treated with care, dignity, and compassion at all times;
- Research should not be intrusive nor otherwise compromise the integrity of the participants or those related to them, or their physical or emotional environment;
- Any incentives offered should not be such as to influence a potential participant to do anything which would be contrary to their best interests;
- Specific permission to make the research enquiries should be obtained and recorded unless it would be unreasonable to do so; that permission should cover the research methodology, the content of the enquiries, and the evidential handling of the research data or findings;
- The research aims, methodology and risks, and the approach to data management, should be clearly and comprehensively explained in writing to each participant at the initial approach, and the participant's written consent must be obtained and should be worded accordingly;
- Anonymity if promised must be safeguarded at all times, as must confidentiality: if the research requires that responses will not be confidential the participant's agreement to this must be specifically and clearly recorded;
- Research data should be managed in compliance with the QMUL Research Data Management Policy;
- Proposed use of the research material must be clearly stated, including possible publication and the form such publication might take;
- Research with children and young people
 - (i) Research with children and young people under the age of 16, and those who may not be able to give informed consent, should only be carried out with the explicit assent of a parent or guardian and with the consent of the child, unless there are exceptional circumstances which must be approved by the relevant QMUL Ethics of Research Committee;
 - (ii) Researchers working with young people aged 16 years and under 18 years should consider the potential risks involved in participating in the research. Research proposals should include an assessment of the environment in which the research is being carried out and any potential risks to participants in order to determine whether assent should be obtained from a parent or carer as well as the consent of the participant. For particularly vulnerable 16–18 year olds (for example if they have a learning disability) and those who may not be able to give informed consent, or if the research is on an exceptionally sensitive or troubling topic, it may be appropriate to consider if parental assent should be sought.

- (iii) Research with children or any vulnerable groups must be conducted with the guidance and supervision of expert intermediaries, and should be conducted in line with relevant external safe-guarding policies.

The Senate has granted authority to the Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee to establish criteria, processes, and procedures to enact this policy and to grant approval to research according to its terms.

Authorisation

This policy was approved by the Queen Mary Senate on 4 December 2014

Further information

Please see <http://connect.qmul.ac.uk/research/ethics-of-research-committee/index.html>