Research and Ethics Policy and Procedures: Guidance for Staff and Students

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1. Introduction

This policy is underpinned by the 'Statement of Vision, Mission and Values' of the College, available online or within the policy documents handbook, and should be read and understood in the context of that statement

This document details the research ethics policy of Waverley Abbey College (WAC) for staff and students who carry out research, and any external researchers who undertake research with WAC staff or students. It includes the process for the ethical approval for research; and outlines general guidance for ethical issues that may arise in the work of the College.

This policy is underpinned by the College mission to:

• integrate Christian faith into the practice of learning in a higher education environment

• serve and equip people in their chosen profession

• provide excellence in courses, teaching, research, and resources and thus facilitate students to reach their full academic and professional potential

• help support people in their everyday life and workplaces so that they may better impact the people they interact with, be they a next-door neighbour or a colleague on another continent.

2. Ethics and research

All research carried out through Waverley Abbey College that involves staff and/or students of the College either as researchers or participants requires ethical review and approval from the Research Ethics Committee.

All teaching experiments, enterprise and research carried out in the name of Waverley Abbey College should conform with The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants on Human Rights, UN General Assembly (December 1984), and with the respective university and Waverley Abbey College guidelines. In addition, it should also adhere to the relevant professional guidelines, for example:

- Ethical Guidelines for Researching in the Counselling Professions (available online from British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) - https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/research/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-research-in-the-counselling-professions/)

- Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (available online from the British Educational Research Association - https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018)

- Global Code of Ethics for Coaches, Mentors, and Supervisors (available online from Global Code of Ethics - https://www.globalcodeofethics.org/)

2.1 Key considerations for the Research Ethics Committee

The Research Ethics Committee will consider the following:

- The topic- balancing the benefits/costs of the research for the participants.
- Potential risk/harm – what are the risks? Have strategies to minimise or manage these been considered?
- Participants – what is the relationship between participants and researcher? What are the researcher's responsibilities to the participants? Vulnerability of the participants? How will confidentiality/anonymity of the participants be assured? Does the proposal evidence ethical consideration at each stage of the research process and sufficient ethical awareness to recruit participants, whether from inside or outside the WAC Alumni network?
- Practicalities – Does the proposal consider how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained practically, and how the data are handled ethically, for example, by consideration of any relevant data regulations and password protection, etc?
- Does the researcher need to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller for the purposes of the research? Registration as a Data Controller is required when data are processed in such a way as to enable identification of the participants (see https://ico.org.uk/ for more information). Registration may depend on the research methodology; in-depth interviews and case studies may result in a requirement for registration whereas as secondary research may not. The context of the research must be considered (e.g., in-depth interviews with a specific group who may be known in Christian circles may lead to inadvertent participant identification).
- Methodology – what attention has been given to the validity, credibility, and reliability of the methodological approach?

2.2 The process for researchers for gaining ethical approval

The first step of this process is the completion of an 'Application for Ethical Approval' (available on Moodle or from the MA Research Module Leader). This should be submitted with the relevant appendices that may include:

- invitation letters to participants
- participant consent forms

- questionnaires
- interview schedules
- research proposal.

2.2.1 Students at Waverley Abbey College - if the applicant is a student at WAC and the research is part of their studies, it is expected that they will have discussed their research and received local approval from their tutor and/or research supervisor prior to submitting an Application for Ethical Approval to the Research Ethics Committee.

2.2.2 Researchers external to WAC - if an individual external to Waverley Abbey College wishes to undertake research with either staff or students an application in writing outlining the research intentions should be submitted in the first instance to the College Executive.

2.2.3 Research that involves participants from other institutions - research protocols which involve access to participants under the day-to-day care of another institution (for example hospital, university or school) will need to produce evidence that the researcher has the agreement of the appropriate authority at the institution concerned.

In the case of any NHS institution this is through the NHS Health Research Authority. Further details can be found at http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/applying-for-approvals/research-ethics-committee/

In the instance of a school, the Head teacher is the appropriate person to contact in the first instance. For guidance about research in other social care settings see http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/non-nhs-recs/national-social-care-research-ethics-committee/

2.3 The Research Ethics Committee process of approval

The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee will determine the process through which each application for ethical approval will be reviewed.

2.3.1 Confidentiality - all proposals presented to the Research Ethics Committee are confidential, therefore discussions about them should not take place with any third party other than the designated member of the university validating the programme or supervising the research.

2.4 Outcome of review by Research Ethics Committee

The outcome of the Application for Ethical Approval by the Research Ethics Committee will be communicated to the applicant in writing.

2.4.1 If the outcome is approval the applicant can then commence with participant recruitment, data collection and the research study. However written notification of

approval must be received by the researcher prior to any participant recruitment and data collection being undertaken.

2.4.2 Waverley Abbey College reserves the right to reject proposals that raise serious ethical concerns, or to forward the researcher's proposal to the relevant university validating the specific programme/research body, or professional organisation for further consideration if deemed necessary.

2.5 Ongoing responsibility of research for ethical practice

Once approval has been granted, the student/researcher must report any ethical issues that arise during the course of the study within 24hrs to his/her supervisor, e.g., major distress of participant/loss of primary data. Data collection must stop until the issue has been investigated and safeguards implemented if necessary, to limit the impact of the ethical issue.

3. Financial and insurance issues

3.1 General guidance for external involvement in the funding of research enterprise or other projects

For the purposes of these guidelines 'external involvement' is defined as any involvement with a body external to the College that generates income to fund a research or other project.

External involvement in the funding of research or other projects is welcome by the College but at the same time the College must maintain its integrity and uphold its values as outlined in its core statement. These guidelines are designed not to be prescriptive but to help the College's members of staff and students to ensure that any external involvement in the funding of research or any other project does not undermine wither the integrity of the College or its values.

It is important that funding should not be sought or accepted from any source to undertake a research or other project that would undermine the integrity of the College.

The provider of funding for a research or other project:

- should not prejudice the outcome of the research or project or curtail the publication of results
- should be asked, where appropriate to declare any interests that might conflict with the work of the College or might be prejudicial to the outcome of a project or might undermine the integrity of the College
- should not have a mission or aims that conflict with those of the College

- should not impose any terms or conditions to the funding that are inconsistent with the College policy, financial regulation, or conflict with the work of the College.

3.1.1. Appropriate Sources of Funding

As a rule, funding from most of the UK research funding councils and government bodies / departments (AHRC, BBSRC, British Council, CCETSW, ESRC, EPSRC, MRC, Las, Local Government Offices) would be deemed an appropriate source of funding. Similarly, funding from most EU bodies / research-funding schemes would also be deemed an appropriate source of funding.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of the source of funding for a research or other project, clarification should be sought from the College Director.

3.2 Insurance

The College insurance should be covered for the risks envisaged in this guidance document under the CWR's Third Party and Officials' Indemnity. Researchers who fail to follow these research ethics guidelines are warned that they risk not being covered by the College's insurance.

External researchers, i.e., researchers not connected to WAC, CWR or part of the WAC alumni network, would normally be required to provide evidence that they have insurance that covers their research, either via professional indemnity insurance or through their organisation.

4. Working with vulnerable groups

The Research Ethics Committee will monitor academic activity that directly or indirectly will involve vulnerable individuals that is adults who legally are designated as vulnerable or individuals who are under 18 years of age.

The following issues must be considered:

- parental/carer consent
- child protection issues.

In the Research Ethics application, the researcher must explain how these, and other potential ethical issues will be addressed. If the project involves working with 16–17 year olds, consent is required from both the parent/carer and the young person. The researcher should have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check specifically for this research activity with either of these groups.

5. Course-specific Considerations for Students' Research

In the Application for Ethical Approval students must demonstrate ethical awareness of any additional course-specific considerations and meet any such requirements.

For example, in line with the BACP Ethical Guidelines for research, counselling students are required to ensure that their Professional Indemnity Insurance covers them for research activities and demonstrate a competent level of ethical awareness if researching sensitive topics.

6. References

Statement of Vision, Mission and Values available at:
https://www.waverleyabbeycollege.ac.uk/about/vision-and-mission/

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants on Human Rights, UN General Assembly (December 1984) available at: https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/