

Research Ethics

Ethics Proposal Form

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The objectives of the session

- The main ethical challenges in doing ethnography
- Workshop: Ethics Proposal Form

Ethics

- **Take it seriously!**
- Read [Guide to Ethics 2019-20.doc](#) carefully (on CANVAS);
- The [Ethics Proposal form 2019-20.doc](#) is available on CANVAS.

Ethics

- Any interaction with human subjects requires **formal** permission;
- You must discuss your ethics form and have it approved by your supervisor;
- Ethics permission **cannot be applied retrospectively.**



Ethics

- You will need at least **two signed copies** of an ethics form:
 - One copy you keep, and this must be bound into your project on submission;
 - The other copy will be retained by the Project Co-ordinator and one will be forwarded to the School Ethics Committee.



Ethics – 5 principles

1. Lack of harm to participants – physical, psychological & social;
2. Confidentiality;
3. Informed consent;
4. Invasion of privacy;
5. Absence of deception.



Respect

Informants are voluntarily giving you their time and information:

- Contact informants beforehand and tell them precisely who you are and what the **broad purpose of your research** is. It is a good idea to write to potential informants and then follow this up with a phone call. This gives informants time to consider your request.
- Be **courteous** at all times.
- Interviewees have the right to **refuse to answer** specific questions or call a halt to the interview without having to offer any explanation.
- **Thank** informants for their time.
- It is courteous to send a short **letter of thanks**.

Let's practice! Work in pairs

You are researching crisis communication Wolves.

- Choose one person you would like to interview;
- Call them, introduce yourself, explain the purpose of the research and ask to participate in the interview.

2 minutes!



Let's practice! Work in pairs

You are researching communication strategies in the Students' Union.

- Choose one person you would like to interview;
- Call them, introduce yourself, explain the purpose of the research and ask to participate in the interview

2 minutes!



Ethics in ethnography: Fieldwork

- All forms of observation require prior permission. Even if meetings are open to the public, you should request permission to attend and should inform **organisers** that you are undertaking research. No form of covert observation will be approved.

Ethics in ethnography: Recording

- Permission must always be sought for taking **photographs**, **tape recording** interviews and **using (video) cameras**.

Confidentiality

- All primary data must be kept in a secure place, which no one else can access. Fieldnotes should be kept in a locked drawer and any data stored on a computer, such as the digital recording of interviews must be password protected.



Anonymity

- It is a usual practice not to identify the research participants in the final write up of the project. Use pseudonyms or simply indicate ‘one interviewee suggested...’



Interview guides

- Must be discussed with your project supervisor before applied. Since these are time-consuming for students and informants alike, due consideration should be given to their appropriateness. They must be of impeccable quality.
- Informants have the right to decide not to reply, to decline to answer any questions, without having to give an explanation.
- The number of informed consent forms should equal the number of interviewed persons.

Special categories of human subjects

- There are several categories of people whom it may be inappropriate to approach — children, vulnerable people, or those who have been traumatized (for example the bereaved, refugees, the terminally ill, etc.).
- **Sensitive and Controversial Topics**

Misrepresentation and fabrication

- Fabrication and falsification of data, and deliberate misrepresentation are serious malpractices and could incur the University's disciplinary procedures. Care should be taken to ensure that information is collected reliably, and that appropriate records of visits, interviews and field work are kept.

Remember: Personal safety

- The Ethics Committee will not approve of any proposal that they consider will place you in any danger or risk.



Remember: Representing the University

- When you are doing the fieldwork, you will be representing the University, and it is important that you do not do anything that could bring the University into disrepute. For example, you must keep appointments that you make and be on time.

Part Two

During the break, think about what topic you would like to research for your MA dissertation.

Part Two

Ethics proposal form

Faculty of Arts

Ethics Proposal Form for undergraduate(Level 6) and taught masters (Level 7) written projects, dissertations independent study, and business links etc. 2019/20

You should read the Faculty Guide to Ethics before filling in this form.

You will require two copies of this form, which you should take to the representative on the Ethics Committee for your subject (Steve Jacobs S.Jacobs@wlv.ac.uk). The member of the Faculty Ethics Committee will sign the forms only if they perceive that your proposal raises no ethical concerns. One signed copy of the form will be sent to the Faculty Ethics Committee, and the other should be bound into one copy of your project on submission as evidence that you have obtained official ethics approval. Please note that this permission is only concerned with ethical issues and does not indicate anything about the intellectual merit of your project.

Please type details into the form.

1. Name:

2. Student number:

3. Email address (this must be your University email address):

If this is a group project, please list ALL other students involved. (Full names and student numbers):

5. Subject/ Department to which the study will contribute:

6. Name of supervisor (if known):

7. Module Code and Title:

9. Project Title:

Research problems

What topic you would like to research for
your MA dissertation?

In this part of the session, you will work individually.

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Chose a research problem for which you will design
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What research questions would you like to answer?

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What research questions would you like to answer?

What methods would you like to use in your
research?

In this part of the session, you will work individually.
Chose a research problem for which you will design
a research proposal.

What research questions would you like to answer?

What methods would you like to use in your
research?

Who would you like to participate in your research?

Faculty of Arts

10. Into which category does your project fall?

Tick as applicable:

<p>Category A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research that involves human subjects that are considered not to cause any physical or psychological harm. 	
<p>Category B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research that may be considered likely to cause physical or psychological harm. • Research that may be contentious and/or risks bringing the University into disrepute. • Research that requires accessing confidential data. • Research that involves individuals considered to be vulnerable. 	

11. Does your study involve any of the following?

(Please tick ALL that apply.)

Making video/DVD	
Making audio recording	
Observation of human subjects	
Participant observation – including on-line activity	
Telephone and/or Email contact with individuals or organisations	
Interviews (structured/ semi-structured/un-structured)	
Questionnaires (including on-line questionnaires)	
Access to confidential information	
Contact with minors (anyone under the age of 18)	
Contact with other vulnerable people (e.g. victims of crime, the recently bereaved)	
Research about a controversial issue	

Other: please specify (e.g. will your finished project be accessible to the public outside the university?)

12. Brief outline of project.

Expand as necessary

13. Methodology.

You should give a brief account of the nature of the intended interaction with human participants, or why your proposal raises ethical concerns. This should include an indication of:

- Your objective in gathering primary data from participants.
- How participants will be identified (including sampling method if doing questionnaires).
- The number of research participants.
- A sample of questions if conducting either interviews or questionnaires.

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Workshop

- Fill in the Ethics Proposal Form
- Present it to the rest of the group
- Feedback and evaluation from the group



Workshop II

- Sketch an informed consent for research participants in your study (5 minutes)
- Remember about the information sheet!
- In pairs, practice taking informed consent.



Bibliography

- [Guide to Ethics 2019-20.doc](#)
- Elsrud, Torun, Philip Lalander, and Annika Staaf. 2016. “Internet Racism, Journalism and the Principle of Public Access: Ethical Challenges for Qualitative Research into ‘Media Attractive’ Court Cases.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39 (11): 1943–61. doi:[10.1080/01419870.2016.1155719](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1155719).