

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED RESEARCH
Dissertation, Educational Enquiry and other taught units¹

To be completed by the student and approved by the supervisor then uploaded to Moodle by the student before any data collection takes place for these units. A nil return is required for students not doing empirical work. Before completing the form, students should read the guidelines published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), which are available in Moodle.

Please read the guidance overleaf prior to completion.

Introduction

Full name of student:	Student number:
Provisional title of your study:	
Justification for your study:	

Participants

1. Who are the main participants in your research (such as interviewees, respondents)?
2. How will you find and contact these participants?
3. How and from whom will you obtain informed consent and communicate the right to withdraw?
4. Have you approached any other body or organisation for permission to conduct this research?
5. At what stages of your research, and in what ways will participants be involved?
6. Have you considered how to share your findings with participants and how to thank them for their participation?

Deception and exploitation avoidance, confidentiality, privacy and accuracy

7. How will you present the purpose of your research? Do you foresee any problems?
8. In what ways might your research cause harm (physical or psychological distress or discomfort, or threat to self-esteem) to yourself or others? What will you do to minimise this? Would access to support be available (if appropriate)?

¹ Where a unit assignment requires empirical work please complete the ethics form as normal

9. What measures are in place to safeguard the identity of participants and locations? Are there special circumstances for consideration e.g. special populations such as children under 16 years?
10. How will you record information faithfully and accurately?

11. Any additional information:

Student:	Signature:
	Date:
Supervising Member of Staff:	Name:
	Signature:
	Date:

NB

Once approved students should upload a signed copy of this form into Moodle <xxxx> before any data collection takes place. A nil return is required for students not doing empirical work. Supervisors should retain a copy for their own records.

Further guidance

Ethical approval for research studies in the MA Education Programme

The research that you do for your MA Education Dissertation or Educational Enquiry will probably have ethical implications. For this reason we require you to obtain ethical approval for your research. **You must therefore obtain ethics approval when planning your research, before you collect any data.** When you have been allocated a dissertation supervisor or educational enquiry tutor, you must complete a draft *MA Ethical Approval Form* (see below). Please discuss the ethical implications of your research with your supervisor/ tutor who may ask you to make some revisions to the form before agreeing to sign it. Then please upload the approved (signed) *MA Ethics Approval Form* to Moodle.

Please look at advice on research ethics before you complete the *MA Ethics Approval Form*. Many organisations and professional bodies produce their own ethical codes of conducts. The British Educational Research Association (BERA, www.bera.ac.uk) has its own code of conduct, which will be a useful starting point for your reading:

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/ethics-and-educational-research-2/http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/ethica1.pdf>

Many textbooks and journal articles about research methodology also provide advice about research ethics.

Ethical practice includes a range of issues such as:

- providing clear information about the research (purposes, benefits, risks) to participants and those giving permission for you to undertake the research
- ensuring that participants understand what the research is about
- allowing participants to exercise their right to withdraw from the research
- obtaining voluntary informed consent from all participants
- avoiding deception (for example, making sure you do not mislead participants into thinking they have no choice whether to take part or not, or doing 'undercover' research without telling participants)
- debriefing the participants (for example, by providing them with findings, explaining the results of the study and inviting their comments and queries)
- ensuring anonymity and privacy.

When research involves vulnerable groups, including children, there are issues about how well the participants understand the activity to which they are consenting. In such cases, you should consult appropriate gatekeepers (e.g. head teachers, parents, social workers) as well as the participants concerned. You should also make sure that your research complies with legal and local (e.g. school/ Local Authority) requirements:

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/ethica1.pdf>

It is important to remember that ethically appropriate behaviour applies to the whole research process, from the design stage through to dissemination of the results. Ethical problems are not always immediately obvious when a research project is planned. Educational research often involves intruding on people's lives, or asking for their views and experiences. Consequently, researchers can find themselves asking questions which are sensitive and which might result in painful memories or bad experiences for the participant. Also, knowing what counts as ethical behaviour within a particular group of people (culture) is an aspect of local knowledge. Therefore, it is something that may have to be discovered while you are conducting the research. We ask you to think ethically and behave with integrity throughout your research project.

Your completed dissertation or educational enquiry should include discussion of ethical issues and how they were managed, together with your reflections and evaluation in relation to this aspect of your research.