

RWCMD Guidelines on ethical approval for non-practice-based research involving human participation (2022)

Please read these guidelines before completing your ethical approval form(s).

All researchers in institutions of higher education are expected to adhere to the Universities UK [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), and to follow the UK Research Integrity Office's [Code of Practice for Research](#). Those who are funded by UK grant-giving bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council, whether directly or indirectly, are bound by the [RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct](#).

The main principles of good research conduct, reflected in the application form for ethical approval, are as follows:

- care and avoidance of harm
- honesty and openness
- accountability and appropriate documentation
- confidentiality
- informed consent
- avoidance of conflicts of interest
- compliance with the law and relevant codes of conduct
- due acknowledgement of collaborators, informants, participants or other contributors to the research.

Practice-based research involving human participation – definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, practice-based research is defined as an original investigation undertaken to gain new insights by means of practice and/or the outcome of that practice, typically the creation of work in a range of artistic domains. Human participation is defined as people's involvement in creative practice primarily, but not exclusively, as co-creators, performers and audiences.

Aims

The aims of these guidelines are to facilitate practice-based research and to enable creative practitioners to reflect on its ethical implications.

Who are these guidelines for?

The guidelines are provided for everyone undertaking practice-based research involving human participation at RWCMD, including postgraduate students on taught courses (e.g. MMus), full-time, part-time and visiting members of staff, and researchers external to RWCMD undertaking research with the participation of students and/or staff at those institutions. These include practitioners in music (e.g. composers and performers), drama (e.g. actors, directors, producers, writers and those responsible for devising performances), design, stage management, and arts management.

Researchers undertaking practice-based research involving human participation fall into two broad categories:

1. Those whose creative practice involves interaction with other people as participants in the research *only* insofar as they are co-creators, performers and/or audiences, e.g. a choreographer or director who makes a work with a specific performing artist or artists;

an actor who interviews a public figure in preparation for playing a role based on their character.

- In such cases the research aims to inform the creative process and the output is its product, such as a work that can be performed or the performance itself.
- 2. Those whose creative practice involves interaction with other people as co-creators, performers and/or audiences *and/or* involvement as participants in their research, as sources of data derived, typically, from interviews, questionnaires, observations or experiments, e.g. a composer-conductor who documents rehearsals of their work-in-progress and the reception of its first performance by members of the audience, via a questionnaire survey.
- In this case the aims of the research are *both* to a) inform the creative process from which the work is one output, and b) find out how the work is received by those present at its first performance. A second research output could be a report of the findings from the analysis of questionnaire data published as a journal article.

Completing and submitting applications for ethical approval

As well as completing the appropriate ethical approval form(s), you should also prepare **participant information sheets** and **consent forms** for participants in *both* your practice-based and non-practice-based research, using the templates provided in the **for participant information sheets and consent forms for research**, *unless* you are undertaking questionnaire research, in which case you are required to include participant information and consent as part of your questionnaire and submit the questionnaire itself.

Applications for ethical approval include the ethical approval form(s), participant information sheet(s), consent form(s), interview schedules, additional information if required and questionnaires as appropriate.

When you have completed the application and it has been checked by your research supervisor (if you are a student), line manager or head of department (if you are a member of staff), the ethical approval form should be signed by both parties and your institutional CUK Research Ethics Committee representative. Complete applications should be submitted electronically.

Please note that data can be used only for the project for which ethical approval is sought. It must be stored securely for a specified period of time, during which it can only re-used in subsequent research with the explicit consent of participants, before it is destroyed.