

RESEARCH ETHICS

(a) **Ethical Requirements**

All members of the University, including staff members, research postgraduate (i.e. MPhil and PhD students), taught postgraduate and undergraduate students, are under an obligation to observe the highest standards of professional conduct. Failure to do so, not only defeats the object of scholarly enquiry, but brings both the researcher and the University into disrepute.

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) is responsible for safeguarding research participants, students conducting research projects and researchers in or affiliated with the Faculty of Education by formally applying accepted principles and procedures for the conduct of research involving human and animal subjects. These principles are enclosed for your information. Staff members and students are required to obtain ethical clearance to undertake any study involving human or animal subjects before any data collection is undertaken. Details of the procedures, application guidelines and application forms can be obtained from <http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/ethics-compliance/hrec>.

(b) **Principles Guiding the Ethical Integrity of Research**

General Principles

The following principles should guide all researchers in the Faculty of Education with respect to the ethical integrity of research:

1. *Integrity*

The ethical integrity of research implies that the conduct of all researchers is characterized by a *respect* for self and others, a willingness to accept *responsibility* for the consequences of one's decisions, and by the principles of *goodness, rightness, fairness* and *honesty*.

A respect for others implies that researchers accord appropriate respect to the rights, dignity, and worth of all researchers and subjects involved in the research.

2. *Competence*

Researchers should undertake only such research that they and their fellow researchers and research students are competent to, so that the safety of all research participants, and the ethical integrity of the research, might not be compromised for reasons of incompetence.

3. *Professional and Scientific Responsibility*

Researchers should conduct their research in a professionally and scientifically responsible manner. Such responsibility is commensurate with the ethical integrity of the research. Researchers should accordingly design, conduct, and report research in accordance with recognized principles and standards of scientific competence and ethical research.

4. *Social Responsibility*

Researchers should be aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live, and to the human community in general. Researchers should in their research seek to advance not only the science of their discipline, but also, ultimately, human welfare.

5. *Concern for Others' Welfare*

Researchers should, at all times and above all other research priorities, be concerned with the welfare and interests of those participating in the research. Researchers should thus take reasonable steps to implement appropriate protection for the rights and welfare of research participants and other persons affected by the research.

6. *Proportionality of Risk*

Research involving human subjects should not be carried out unless the importance of the objectives is in proportion to the inherent risk to the subject. Potential hazards should be predictable, and should never outweigh the benefits of the research.

Research-Specific Issues

1. *Informed Consent*

Researchers should obtain the appropriate informed consent of research participants, in language that is reasonably understandable to research participants, and that is appropriately documented.

2. *Inducements*

Inducements to participate that are offered to potential research participants should be appropriate and commensurate with standard practice.

3. *Deception*

Researchers should not conduct a study involving deception unless they have determined that the use of deceptive techniques is justified by the study's prospective scientific value, and that equally effective alternative procedures that do not use deception are not feasible.

Researchers should never deceive research participants about significant aspects that would affect their willingness to participate, such as physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences. If deception is involved, researchers are obliged to debrief subjects on the nature of the deception as soon as it is practically possible.

4. *Invasiveness*

Researchers should ensure that any invasive procedures are kept to a minimum, and such procedures, where necessary, involve minimal discomfort and no physical or other risk to research participants.

5. *Commitments*

Researchers should take reasonable measures to honour all commitments they have made to research participants.

6. *Sharing of Information*

Researchers should provide a prompt opportunity for participants to obtain appropriate information about the nature, results, and conclusions of the research.

7. *Privacy and Confidentiality*

Researchers should at all times seek to respect the privacy of research participants, and to maintain confidentiality in all matters related to individual research participants.