

# THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

## Postgraduate Taught Ethics Policy, 2016

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Benchmarking	-

# The Glasgow School of Art

## Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Ethics Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 PGT Research requires ethical approval before the research can commence. The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is committed to supporting and developing research and knowledge exchange at PGT level that is rigorous and of the highest possible quality. It is recognised that an ethics policy can help to protect all those involved in research from harm. It is also an essential tool in maintaining quality and integrity in research. Additionally, it is a requirement of almost all funding bodies that ethical considerations relating to all research and knowledge exchange activities are made clear.

1.2 This GSA PGT Ethics Policy relates to all postgraduate taught students (excluding MRes and PhD as there is a separate Ethics policy for PGR and Staff Research).

1.3 The GSA PGT Ethics Policy should be read alongside the *GSA Research Ethics Code of Practice*. Both of these documents set out minimum standards to which all PGT student researchers must comply when undertaking research activities.

1.4 Almost all kinds of research will have ethical implications. Therefore, students will be required to demonstrate that the ethical issues have been identified, considered and appropriate steps taken to address any issues identified.

1.5 There are two related processes for gaining ethical approval for research carried out at PGT level at GSA. The first is the completion of an ethics self-assessment form, which is completed by the student and discussed and signed off by their tutor or supervisor. This is usually undertaken for research considered to be low risk. A full ethical assessment is available for research where the ethical parameters need further in-depth consideration following the completion of the self- assessment form. These applications require approval by the PGT Ethics Committee. The process for gaining ethical approval for PGT research is explained in section 6 and 7 of this document.

## 2. Definitions of Research

2.1. There exist many definitions of research. Three definitions are offered here to help clarify what is meant by the term 'research'.

2.1.1 The Oxford English Dictionary defines research as 'any systematic investigation or inquiry aimed at contributing to knowledge of a theory, topic, etc., by careful consideration, observation, or study of a subject.' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016).

2.1.2 "[a]rts-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies". (Knowles, J.G and Cole, A (2008) *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* pg 29).

2.1.3 The Research Excellence Framework, which is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK Higher Education Institutions over a 5-6 year cycle, offers the following definition: research is '*a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared*' (REF2014, 02.2011, Annex C).

## 3. Research and Knowledge Exchange Activities

3.1. In the context of the above definitions, the Research Excellence Framework again offers a useful explanation that encompasses both research and knowledge exchange activities. "...work that is of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry and; scholarship; the invention and generation of new ideas, images, performances, artifacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and process, including design and construction" (REF2014, 02.2011, Annex C).

3.2 Work undertaken as part of other professional practice (not as part of a GSA PGT programme) and carried out outside of GSA is the responsibility of the student. Work of this kind should not be carried out on GSA premises.

3.3 The GSA PGT Ethics Policy does not apply to day-to-day pedagogic enquiry and interventions that are part of the normal educational interactions between teacher, student and institution. However, if a student is carrying out a defined research project in which data is being gathered systematically from peers and / or tutor (or others), over an extended period (beyond one teaching session) this **does** require careful ethical consideration and self-assessment of the type described here.

3.4 The GSA PGT Ethics Policy also applies to any research work undertaken by a PGT student whose main focus is knowledge exchange.

#### **4. Obligations and Responsibility of the PGT Student researcher**

4.1 All PGT students must comply with the *GSA PGT Ethics Policy*, as set out within this document. In complying with the policy, the student understands the importance of the need to undertake thorough ethical consideration of all the issues in the proposed planned research prior to it commencing. This implies that the student researcher has completed the *ethics self-assessment form* - this form helps the student to assess and minimize the risks associated with their research proposal.

4.2 Student researchers must also comply with the *GSA Ethics Code of Practice* and adhere to its principles and recommendations when carrying out their research.

4.3 It is the responsibility of the student researcher to ensure that the appropriate ethical clearance, both within GSA (and, if appropriate, with other bodies) has been obtained prior to carrying out their research. Any student who fails to do so may be subject to GSA disciplinary procedures and/or be in breach of legislation relating to the work (which *could* lead to criminal charges being brought).

4.4 Students must familiarise themselves with all relevant legislation relating to their research. This includes (but is not limited to): the Data Protection Act (2010), Freedom of Information Act (Scotland, 2002), the Equalities Act (2010), the Computer Misuse Act (1990), the Obscene Publications Act (1964) and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. It also includes all legislation governing working with participants unable to give informed consent, safeguarding children, welfare of animals, uses of human tissue and health and

safety regulations.<sup>1</sup> Further information can be obtained from the 'PGT Research Ethics Folder' on the VLE.

4.5 In addition to legislation, student researchers must familiarise themselves with relevant GSA policies which are not located within the Learning and Teaching Office (because they are central policies) but which nonetheless impact upon student research activities. In particular, student researchers should refer to the Health and Safety Policy and Data Protection Policy. It is the responsibility of the student researcher to abide by each of these and any obligations contained within these policies.

4.6 All Glasgow School of Art PGT students must demonstrate ethically sound behaviour when carrying out research as part of their work at the Glasgow School of Art, including (but not limited to):

- i) formally acknowledging the contribution and assistance of others (including collaborating student, colleagues etc.);
- ii) honouring any contractual agreements, copyrights and the ownership of intellectual property and avoiding any practice that may mislead in respect of what is presented;
- iii) publishing (regardless of format / vehicle) research to the highest standards of academic integrity and representation;
- iv) independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be clearly declared by the student researcher via the PGT Research Ethics Committee.

4.7 When conducting research work in collaboration with other institutions, student researchers should act in accordance with agreements set out between the research parties, including complying with the rules, regulations and processes of partner organisations where specified. For example, research carried out on NHS premises and/or NHS patients requires students to undertake NHS ethical procedures laid out by the Department of Health.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) for up to date information

## **5. Ethical issues to which this policy relates**

5.1 The following is a list of ethical issues this policy pertains to:

- a. Voluntary participation of research subjects;
- b. Respect for vulnerable persons, human dignity, free & informed consent;
- c. Full disclosure to research subjects (including the purpose of the research, length of time the information will be kept for, the nature of its use, confidentiality & security thereof and right to withdraw from participation);
- d. Research free from coercion or deception (including incentives or covert research) paying due heed to the Bribery Act 2010;
- e. Support for research subjects / participants to minimise distress or anxiety;
- f. Data Protection compliance (including confidentiality, security and destruction of data);
- g. Disclosure Scotland compliance (where required);
- h. Extent to which research could be met with reduced numbers of human subjects;
- i. Extent to which research will achieve its desired aims and not waste time of research subjects;
- j. Animal welfare;
- k. Use of animal or human tissue;
- l. Use of archives, datasets, databases, visual material (e.g. photographic or video), internet or social media material;
- m. Harm: Benefit Analysis;
- n. Conflict of interest;
- o. Conservation;
- p. Professional integrity;
- q. Adherence to GSA ethical policies and procedures and those of any collaborating institutions / organisations, as well as local regulations;
- r. Compliance with all legislation related to the research work.

5.2 All research conducted within GSA will incur one or more of the issues outlined above to a greater or lesser extent. PGT Research requires ethical approval via the self-assessment process (in the first instance) and may require a full ethical assessment before the research can commence. (See section 6 for further details)

## **6. PGT Research Ethics Committee and Remit**

6.1 The PGT Research Ethics Committee meets not less than once per academic year to define the institution's approach to research ethics. It receives an annual report on applications made in the course of the academic year and discusses changes in the external environment that may require changes to research ethics policy and procedures.

6.2 The PGT GSA Research Ethics Committee is convened by the Head of Learning and Teaching, and consists of two Senior Academics and the Senior Academic Fellow (Digital Learning). From time to time representatives from other areas of GSA (such as Human Resources, IT) may be called to participate as well as lay members from outside GSA who have specialist expertise.

6.3 Members of the Committee are recognised as active researchers in their own right and therefore, will be familiar with submitting applications for ethical consideration through the Research and Doctoral Studies Office. Where a conflict of interest arises, this will be managed by the Head of Learning and Teaching.

6.4 The remit of the GSA PGT Research Ethics Committee is:

To oversee questions of ethics relating to the development of research and knowledge exchange activities for GSA PGT students.

6.5 To be responsible on behalf of the UPC for:

- i) Establishing and maintaining the PGT ethics policy;
- ii) Establishing an ethics protocol, preliminary PGT self-assessment form and Full Ethics assessment;
- iii) Establishing and maintaining best practice on ethical issues in relationship to RCUK standards, NHS as well as other funders;
- iv) Review, recommend and make decisions on all ethical issues that relate to research and knowledge exchange activities by GSA PGT student researchers;
- v) All reporting on matters arising during committee operation.

## 7. PGT Procedures for gaining ethical approval

7.1 Almost all research & knowledge exchange activities are likely to incur an ethical dimension and therefore require the completion of a self-assessment ethics form (in the first instance) to demonstrate that such ethical issues have been considered, identified and mitigated. A flowchart of the process is included in Annex A at the end of this document. The procedure is as follows:

7.1.1 All students must complete and submit to their tutor, supervisor or Programme Leader *Form 1: Preliminary Ethical Self-Assessment Form*, in order to obtain sign off for any proposed piece of research or extended piece of research, including research undertaken as part of group work. Once both parties have signed the document, it will be lodged with the Programme Leader for future reference. In the case of Stage 3 projects, a draft information sheet and draft consent forms should also be appended.

7.1.2 Based on the information supplied in Form 1 (preliminary self-assessment), student researchers will normally be advised by their tutor/supervisor/Programme Leader whether there are ethical issues which require a full ethical assessment (in accordance with GSA protocol), or that requires external approval (for example NHS approval). If Form 1 provides sufficient information, it will be signed off by the student's tutor, supervisor or Programme Leader.

7.1.3 Full ethical approval will require the student to complete *Form 2: Full Ethical Assessment*. This is a narrative based form designed to help the student researcher carefully examine the finer details of their proposed research. Types of research likely to require full ethical assessment include:

- Working with under 18 year olds;
- Research that might fall under The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015<sup>2</sup> (CTSA) and related duty of public sector organisations, known as the 'prevent duty'. For clarity this could encompass i) research in a UK Foreign Office no go area; ii) extremism / radicalization; iii) publication of sensitive material that could incite extremism, radicalization or hate crime;

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>



- Participants that lack capacity in accordance with the Adults with Incapacity Act (2000) Scotland;
- Research topics deemed as i) sensitive research (for example those topics considered private, stressful or sacred, such as sexuality or death); ii) that could induce harm or distress beyond reasonable expectation; iii) where the safety or wellbeing of the researcher themselves could be in jeopardy;

7.1.4 Form 2: Full Ethical Assessment forms and materials will be reviewed by at least two member of the GSA PGT Ethics Committee.

7.1.5 Committee members will consider the application, make a decision and report the decision via the Senior Academic Fellow to the applicant. The members may:

- a) approve the application;
- b) reject the application, stating reasons;
- c) request further information or modifications to the application.

7.1.6 In the case of (C), in part 7.1.5 above, the revised application must be re-submitted through the same procedure.

7.1.7 In the case of research that falls under the Counter-Terrorism Security Act 2015 and in accordance with standard academic practice, researchers will be expected to conduct such research in a responsible manner that does not contravene this legislation. Committee members and the Senior Academic Fellow (Digital Learning) will offer advice in this regard, consulting with the GSA Prevent Working Group for expertise where necessary.

7.2 Where research is undertaken in collaboration with another institution or organisation outside of the Glasgow School of Art, the ethics policies of those institutions should be appended to Form 2 at the point of obtaining sign off. Web links to those policies are also acceptable.

7.3 All forms and documents relating to the GSA PGT Ethics procedure can be found on the VLE within the 'PGT Research Ethics' folder to which all PGT students and staff have access.

7.4 In the instance of research falling into the remit of NHS Research Ethics, approval from an NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) will be required before research can begin. In this case GSA's Full Ethical Review (Form 2) will not be required.

7.5 Programmes in which other approved institutions require specific ethical approvals (i.e. Medical Research Ethics), these ethical applications can be submitted as a record of ethical approval instead of GSA's Full Ethical Assessment.

## **8. Reporting**

8.1 Where appropriate, The Convener of the PGT Ethics Committee can provide UPC with updates on the business of the PGT Ethics Committee.

8.2 The Senior Academic Fellow will report to the PGT Ethics Committee on the number of research ethics Form 2 documents (Full Ethical Assessment) that have been submitted during the period between committee meetings. Through this, the workload and planning can be managed as well as ensuring the appropriate persons are present at future meetings.

8.3 Any reporting which is required on PGT ethics which could be either internal to GSA or external (e.g. Research Council requirements), will be the responsibility of PGT Ethics Committee. Where information is requested by PGT Ethics Committee of student researchers, they will be informed as quickly as possible of outcomes, and should comply with all requests for information.

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## References

In compiling the PGT Ethics Policy, the author gratefully acknowledges the following documents:

1. GSA Research Ethics Policy 2005
2. University of the Arts London, Code of Practice on Research Ethics
3. University of the Arts London, Guidance for Research Ethics Approval
4. University of Bristol, Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure
5. Oxford Brookes University, Ethics Review Process
6. Oxford Brookes University, What does it mean for me
7. Oxford Brookes University, University Research Ethics Committee (terms of reference)
8. Royal College of Art, Terms of Reference and Membership for the Research and Ethics Committee
9. Department of Health, Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care, 2005
10. ESRC, Framework for Research Ethics
11. Policy on Conducting Sensitive Research, De Montfort University 2016
12. Ethics and your research project, J Spencer (PhD student), Miriad Ethics Research Project, Manchester School of Art & Manchester Metropolitan University.
13. Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 – Good Practice Guide for Scottish Higher Education Institutions (prepared by the Higher Education Prevent Working Group, June 2015)
14. Oversight of Security Sensitive Research Material in UK HEI's, Guidance Document 2010.

**ANNEX A: FLOW CHART TO ILLUSTRATE ETHICS APPROVALS PROCESS**

