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Relationship to other documents:

This policy is supported by:

- Application for Research Ethics Approval Form
- ToR_Research Ethics Committee
- Higher Education Academic Appeals Procedure

Scope and Purpose of Policy

This policy applies to all students studying at Level 4 or above at York College. Any student who contributes to higher education research at York College is responsible for ensuring that all research is conducted in accordance with this policy. They are entitled to research ethics procedures and guidelines that are clear, accessible and compliant with the requirements of the awarding body.

Its purpose is to ensure that the HE research ethics procedures are implemented consistently across the College and sets out the principles underpinning ethical research conduct. All research must be conducted according to the requirements of awarding bodies and the standards and obligations of ethical, legal and professional frameworks. In addition, the HE Research Ethics Policy and procedures are fully informed by the Research Councils United Kingdom (RCUK) Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct February 2013 (updated April 2017).

Definition of Research

A general definition of research has been used to inform this Research Ethics Policy. This is from the Research Excellence Framework 2014 .

Research Excellence Framework 2014:

- *'Research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared'*
- *'It includes research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports.'*
- *'It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts 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, products and processes . ….*' - www.ref.ac.uk

'Research' for the purposes of this policy is to be understood as:

- Original investigation undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding
- Work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors
- Scholarship
- The invention and generation of ideas, images, performance, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights
- The use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

Policy Statement

The College is responsible for the academic standards, quality and ethical practice of the programmes it designs and delivers and is therefore accountable for:

- Providing research ethics procedures and guidelines that are clear, accessible and compliant with the requirements of the awarding body.
- Ensuring consistent implementation of research ethics procedures and principles for each higher education award.
- Evaluating how academic standards, ethical principles and professional conduct are maintained throughout all research activities to encourage effective learning and a high-quality learning experience.
- Ensuring that External Examiner feedback is utilised effectively to inform future research practice and enhancements to processes.

1. Key Principles

a) Integrity, propriety and legal compliance

Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken with adherence to standards of integrity, ethical propriety and legal compliance.

b) Partiality and 'public good'

Any conflicts of interest or partiality must be disclosed, and the independence of research must be clear. The publication of research results must be conducted fairly and with the public good taking precedence over private.

c) Safety and protection of rights

Research must avoid harm to all research participants, researchers, non- participating members of the public and the environment. This includes the protection of the rights, safety, dignity and wellbeing of all participants.

d) Informed participation

Research participants must normally be informed as fully as possible about the purpose, intended uses and methods of the research including what their participation entails and any risks and benefits involved. The information should be accurate, clear and easily understood by the potential participant, who should have the capacity to understand what is involved in their participation.

e) Participant consent

Research participants must consent to participate in a voluntary way, free from coercion, undue influence or manipulation and the use of inducements must be carefully monitored.

f) Participant anonymity

Participant anonymity and the information they provide must be respected, unless illegal behaviour is discovered. All data must be collected, processed, stored and disposed of, in accordance with current legal requirements. (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR, 2018)

2. Process and Procedures

The college has devised a process of ensuring the ethical integrity of research. The process identifies the procedures that must be followed to obtain ethical clearance for all research. Ethical Approval is required for all research. Approval is granted by a Research Ethics Committee after the student's application has been agreed by the appointed Research Supervisor and an independent reader from within York College. .

Where a member of staff wishes to undertake research within the College, the Director of Quality of Education shall evaluate the proposal and confirm it has ethical approval before making a recommendation to the Research Ethics Committee.

Where an external researcher requests access to College staff and/or students, the Director of Quality of Education will liaise with them and make a decision as the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

3. External Moderation

External Examiners/Moderators consider ethical considerations as part of their review of assessments and will be appointed for a standard period of tenure for each award.

- The academic regulations of the Validating Institution will be implemented in relation to appointment, training, the examining process and requirements and reporting mechanisms.
- Information relating to the process will be provided by the HEI.

To ensure the quality of its provision and maintain the standards of its awards, the College places significant reliance on its External Moderators by:

- Requiring them to provide informed, independent and impartial judgements and advice to the College.
- Drawing upon their professional advice and expertise and giving serious and active consideration to their reports.

The purposes of the External Moderation process are to:

- Verify that standards are appropriate for the award.
- Report on the standards of achievement and verify that academic standards are comparable to other institutions in the sector.
- Ensure that fairness and equity are evident in the assessment process, marking, grading and classification of student performance, and that decisions are made in accordance with the relevant Academic Regulations.
- Provide externality of opinion and objective advice on the processes involved in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Identify, where appropriate, examples of good practice and areas for enhancement

4. Staff development and training

The College requires that all members of staff involved in supervising student's research are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Research Supervisors will be appropriately qualified, trained and meet the requirements of the awarding body, and the standards and obligations of the HE Quality Code and appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks.

The College will seek to ensure that, where applicable, other educational providers, workplace and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of learners.

5. Equality and Diversity Statement

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and with consideration of assessment guidelines set out by awarding bodies and where appropriate, the HE Quality Code.

The College is committed to:

- Ensuring appropriate consideration for specialist research facilities and equipment for students with disabilities
- Providing clear and timely information for students on research ethics procedures in relation to candidates with disabilities and candidates who require special consideration
- Ensuring that research ethics procedures provide equal opportunity for all candidates to demonstrate their achievement of the required learning outcomes for research

Where the Higher Education Academic Appeals Procedure applies to any learner conducting research with a disability, the College will refer to any reasonable adjustment that has been made or should be made for that individual. Higher Education Academic Appeals will also be monitored in terms of special characteristics.

6. Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies

The College requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies and, where appropriate, professional bodies. The College has developed appropriate internal policies and procedures that cover major requirements.

7. Monitoring and Review

The College will regularly monitor and review this policy and its associated procedures to ensure continued adherence to ethical, legal and professional frameworks and assess the effectiveness of its implementation and outcomes

8. Appeals

If an application for ethical consideration is rejected, it will normally be referred to the applicant with the deficiencies identified and opportunity for further submission. Any appeals are made through the Higher Education Academic Appeals Procedure.