

Research ethics

What are research ethics?

Research ethics are a set of principles about how researchers and research organizations should conduct themselves when dealing with research participants, other researchers and colleagues, the users of their research and society in general. Particularly relevant to the social sciences are ethics associated with projects involving human participants, including conducting surveys, focus groups and the use of secondary data. Typical considerations include:

- Recruiting study participants and informed consent
- Keeping data secure and confidential
- Making procedures, methods and findings transparent so that they can be assessed
- Safety and risk

Consult guidelines and codes of conduct relevant to the research being conducted.

Why are research ethics important?

It is important to conduct research in line with ethical standards for a number of reasons:

- In order to respect and cause no harm to the participants
- As a sign of respect for other researchers and those who will use the research
- It is a professional requirement particularly in some disciplines and failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures.
- It is a requirement to obtain funding.
- Failing to conduct research ethically could be embarrassing or result in research (or the researcher) being dismissed or rejected by the research community.
- Research involving human beings, including using questionnaires and focus groups, must be passed by an Ethics Committee whose job it is to confirm that the research conforms to a set of ethical guidelines.

If ethics are considered, this should make sure that the work is acceptable to the research community and other users of the research results.

<http://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/resources/ethics/importance/index.shtml>