

# GRADUATE INSTITUTE RESEARCH ETHICS GUIDELINES

1. PREAMBLE .....	1
2. GENERAL STATEMENT .....	1
3. CODE OF PRACTICE AND KEY ISSUES .....	2
4. LAWS AND REGULATIONS .....	5
5. MISCONDUCT AND SANCTIONS .....	6
6. ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (ERC) .....	6
7. RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....	7

## 1. PREAMBLE

The present guidelines provide a general framework for ethical conduct of research to the members of the Graduate Institute research community. Ethical dilemmas may occur at different stages of research projects and relate to issues as diverse as choice of topics, methods or funders, the conduct of fieldwork or research abroad, the gathering and storage of data or the publication of results. The present guidelines are neither intended to be exhaustive nor apodictic but to offer guidance to researchers by identifying a series of ethical principles and standards germane to the design and implementation of their projects.

## 2. GENERAL STATEMENT

The Graduate Institute is committed to the highest ethical standards and promotes a research environment based on the principles of good governance, non-discrimination, social responsibility, respect, honesty and integrity. Staff, students and third parties undertaking research at, on behalf of, or in collaboration with the Graduate Institute are expected to share the same commitment and respect the dignity, rights and safety of research subjects, collaborating researchers, and communities they work with. Researchers should at all times comply with best practices to minimise risk and avoid harm, protect vulnerable groups and persons,

respect confidentiality and privacy, and observe the legal provisions of Switzerland and the countries in which they are operating. The Graduate Institute fully adheres to the principle of academic freedom and is convinced that the present guidelines in no way interfere or curtail the independence of research but are its very precondition.

## 3.CODE OF PRACTICE AND KEY ISSUES

It is the responsibility of faculty, students and third parties undertaking research at, on behalf of, or in collaboration with the Graduate Institute to observe internationally accepted standards of ethics and integrity and to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of all participants. Researchers are bound to follow the requirements and guidance of professional bodies in their field and to comply with the laws applicable in the jurisdictions in which they are operating. They should respect the terms and conditions of their contractual engagements (e.g. with grant giving bodies) and abide by the principles of ethical conduct and transparency in their project management.

Particular caution and diligence is required when research involves or relates to:

- **vulnerable individuals or groups**
- **protected or confidential data**
- **politically or otherwise sensitive issues (e.g. sexual behaviour or preference, experience of violence or abuse, mental health, use of medical data, ethnic status, religious belief, criminal offences)**
- **psychological stress or anxiety for participants**
- **intrusive intervention or data collection**
- **work in politically sensitive, conflictual or dangerous environments**
- **health and medical issues**

In general terms risks to researchers and participants may be reduced by adhering to the following principles:

- **Do no harm**
  - Researchers are bound to prevent or minimize harm and possible adverse consequences for human subjects or groups they are investigating.
  - In some cases the principle of do no harm must be balanced against research's critical function and quest for truth (e.g. cases where research may reveal findings that expose illicit or otherwise noxious behaviour of individuals or collective actors)
- **Protection of researchers**
  - The safety of researchers and participants should be treated as imperative and their exposure to risk minimised
  - Places of investigation must be appropriate to the type of study

- Adequate risk assessment and liaison with the Institute's insurance officer/Human Resources Services is required prior to research conducted in conflict zones or dangerous environments (please refer to: <http://intranet.graduateinstitute.ch/home/services/rh/deplacement-professionnel.html>)

➤ **Protection of vulnerable persons, groups and communities**

- Vulnerable persons and groups include, among others, children and young people, prisoners, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship or socially marginalised or persecuted groups. They should be treated with particular care, prudence and protection, especially regarding the collection of informed consent and data protection but also the choice of adequate research methodologies.

➤ **Collection of voluntary informed consent**

- Researchers must obtain consent from research participants (1) when data is collected through surveys, interviews, interaction, or intervention; or (2) when behaviour of research participants is observed in a private context.
- In order to obtain informed consent, researchers enter into an agreement with research participants that should address the purpose and anticipated consequences of the research; the identity of funders and sponsors; the anticipated uses of the data; possible harm or discomfort that might affect participants; and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to informants and subjects.
- Consent has to be free from exculpatory language and may not alienate any human rights
- Ideally, informed consent is obtained in writing. In situations where written consent is impossible, inadequate or counterproductive consent may be obtained orally. However, researchers are bound to keep records regarding consent and update it as needed.
- Impairments to reasoning and judgment which may make it impossible for someone to give informed consent include mental illness, intoxication, or dementia.
- For persons who are legally incapable of giving informed consent or in case of vulnerable populations (children) researchers need take special care to ensure that consent is not coerced. Appropriate permission may have to be gained from a legally authorized person or gatekeeper.
- Researchers may conduct research in public places or use publicly available information about individuals (e.g. observations in public places, analysis of public records, or archival research) without obtaining consent. However, the registration of behaviour using technical equipment (camera, video, tape recorders, etc.) requires consent.

➤ **Respect of confidentiality and anonymity**

- As a general principle, participants should not be identifiable in the investigation outputs, except where they are providing information as experts, the disclosure of their identity may significantly add to the value of the research (e.g. oral history, ethnographic case studies) or the participant requests identification. In all cases, participants need to explicitly consent to being identified and have a right to review content associated with their name.
- Anonymity not only relates to the non-disclosure of names but also to the fact of rendering difficult or impossible the identification of specific people through cross-referencing data contained in a research output.
- Anonymity and confidentiality should be respected with particular diligence when dealing with sensitive personal data on race/ethnic origin, political opinions, gender or sexual orientation, religious beliefs, trade union membership, health (mental or physical) or details of criminal offences.
- In some instances, a provision of confidentiality may be unnecessary, e.g., when the human participant is a public figure or official spokesperson for an organization.
- Rights to confidentiality are limited by the fact that researchers are bound to avoid complicity in unlawful behaviour and prevent the occurrence of serious crime.

➤ **Principle of non-discrimination**

- Researchers should at all times treat colleagues and participants fairly, equally and without prejudice. Discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth and other status should be systematically prevented, and eliminated.

➤ **Good reference practice**

- Work of others should be adequately acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the rules of good academic practice in all research proposals, outcomes and publications.
- Researchers should abstain from fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.
- Reporting should follow the principles of accuracy and transparency

➤ **Adequate data management and protection**

- All data should be treated confidentially and used anonymously unless specified otherwise and agreed to by participants
- Sensitive or protected data should be processed in accordance with the relevant legal provisions and requirements, be kept safe from unauthorized access, be preserved from accidental loss or destruction, and be adequately disposed of upon completion of the research

- Access to information should be suitably secured and restricted to authorised staff. For example, hard copy records should be held securely in lockable cabinets and electronic records should be stored on secure drives.
- Identifiable personal data collected for one particular research purpose cannot automatically be used for other research and should not be used for commercial or administrative purposes.
- Data which has been anonymised with a low residual risk of re-identification may be published and stored for future research.

➤ **Avoidance of conflicts of interest**

- Researchers should maintain the highest degree of integrity and avoid conflicts of interest. They should, in particular, refrain from conducting research in contexts where personal, professional, legal, financial or other interests or relationships may induce bias or partiality.
- Researchers should acknowledge the receipt of any financial support, sponsorship, or unique privileges and take appropriate action to prevent conflict of interest or disclose it to appropriate parties

➤ **Commensurate compensations for research participants**

- Researchers should abstain from offering excessive or inappropriate financial or other inducements to obtain the participation of research participants, particularly when it might coerce participation. However, researchers may provide incentives and small compensations to participants as long as they are appropriate and proportional.

➤ **Preservation of the possibility of future research**

- Researchers should commit themselves to leave a research field in a state which does not preclude future access by other researchers.

## 4.LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Staff, students and third parties undertaking research at, on behalf of, or in collaboration with the Graduate Institute are bound to conform to applicable Swiss law, in particular the *Federal Act on Research Involving Human Beings* (HRA) <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19920153/index.html> and the *Federal Act on Data Protection* (FADP) <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20061313/index.html>, the regulatory requirements of the countries in which their research takes place, as well as with applicable international regulations and standards such as laid out in the *1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *1983 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, the *1987 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

# 5.MISCONDUCT AND SANCTIONS

Misconduct in research includes plagiarism, abuse of intellectual property, misuse of research resources, fraud, falsification or deception of research results, breach of confidentiality, discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct, and failure to follow established protocols resulting in unreasonable risk or harm to participants. It also includes the unauthorised use, disclosure or removal of, or damage to data or research results.

The Graduate Institute regards any such misconduct or any breach of regulatory requirements as a very serious matter, which may result in strict disciplinary action. Scientific misconduct may constitute a breach of relevant legal regulations, e.g. in criminal law and civil law, copyright, patent rights and legislation on environmental protection and trigger lawsuits, public prosecution and sanctions.

# 6.ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (ERC)

The purpose of the Ethics Review Committee of the Graduate Institute is to assess the ethical issues of projects submitted to it for consideration especially those where ethics approval is requested by external parties.

- The *Ethics Review Committee* is competent in all cases in which research ethics approval is requested by an external funding authority - be it at the project submission stage or a later stage
- The *Ethics Review Committee* assesses projects and grant applications submitted to external funding bodies (Swiss National Science Foundation [SNSF], Swiss Network for International Studies [SNIS], European Research Council [ERC], etc.). Research projects not falling under this category but potentially presenting significant ethical risks may be referred to the Ethics Review Committee by way of exception. In such cases a written request and a preliminary assessment are required from the thesis supervisor (in case of PhD projects) or from the Head of the relevant department or research centre/programme.
- For a project to be considered for review, the completed *Research Ethics Approval Form* must be submitted together with the required attachments to the *Ethics Review Committee* (researchoffice@graduateinstitute.ch) at least four weeks prior to the date the approval is necessary.
- The *Ethics Review Committee* may:
  - grant approval to research projects submitted for review;
  - seek additional information or ask for revisions before granting approval;
  - withhold its approval;

# 7. RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Researchers and students of the Institute are encouraged to refer to the *Research Ethics Checklist* in order to self-assess whether their research may be ethically sensitive.

Please find, below, a list of guidelines and codes of practice from which the present code is inspired and may provide further guidance to researchers on ethics related issues:

- *American Anthropological Association Ethics Code and Resources*  
<http://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1895>
- *The Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities.*  
<https://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/21765/guidelinesresearchethicsinthosocialscienceslawhumanities.pdf>
- *Code of Ethics of the American Sociological Association (ASA)*  
<http://www.asanet.org/membership/code-ethics>
- *Guidelines from the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth*  
<http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>
- *Oral History Society of the UK Ethical Guidelines*  
<http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/>
- *The British Sociological Association: Statement of Ethical Practice*  
<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/the-bsa/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>
- *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*  
[http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public\\_documents/Publications/ResearchIntegrity\\_report.pdf](http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/ResearchIntegrity_report.pdf)
- *Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA)*  
<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>
- *US National Science Foundation: The Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects*  
<https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/45cfr690.pdf>
- *US National Science Foundation: FAQ*  
<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp>
- *Canadian Government: Panel on Research Ethics*  
<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/index/>
- *Political Studies Association, Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct*  
<https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/GUIDELINES%20FOR%20GOOD%20PROFESSIONAL%20CONDUCT.pdf>
- *British Library: Code of Practice on Research Ethics*  
[www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/researchethics](http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/researchethics)
- *Singapore Statement on Research Integrity*  
<http://www.singaporestatement.org/>
- *Montreal statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations*  
<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/olpd/MontrealStatement.pdf>

- *American Historical Association (AHA): Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*  
<https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct>
- *Swiss Ethics*  
[http://www.swissethics.ch/index\\_f.html](http://www.swissethics.ch/index_f.html)
- *European Commission (2010): European Textbook on Ethics in Research*  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/textbook-on-ethics-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/textbook-on-ethics-report_en.pdf)