



Research Integrity Policy

(for Student Research
in Further Education and Training)

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Research Integrity Policy for Student Research

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Definitions

Vulnerable person	<p><i>“means a person, other than a child, who is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia, has an intellectual disability, is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing or bathing”¹ (ETBI, 2024).</i></p> <p>Vulnerability can also stem from social, economic or educational disadvantage or other reasons, for example, prisoners, terminally ill individuals, victims of trauma etc.</p> <p>A distinction should be made between an adult who is unable to safeguard him or herself, and one who is deemed to have the skill, means or opportunity to keep him or herself safe, but chooses not to do so. (ETBI Adult Safeguarding Policy, 2024).</p>
Child/children²	Is a person under the age of 18 years
Primary Research	Is research (data or information) collected directly and firsthand by the researcher. Examples of primary research include data or information from surveys, questionnaires, observations, and interviews.

Acronyms

DSQ	Development, Support & Quality Department	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
ETB	Education and Training Board	SMT	Senior Management Team
FET	Further Education and Training	QA	Quality Assurance

¹ Taken from: ETBI’s Garda Vetting Guidelines for The Education and Training Boards (ETBs), 15 May 2024.

² Taken from: ETBI’s Garda Vetting Guidelines for The Education and Training Boards (ETBs), 15 May 2024.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Purpose.....	5
1.2 Scope	5
1.3 Responsibilities for Implementation.....	5
1.4 Other Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	6
2. GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS	6
3. INTERNAL MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY.....	8
4. EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY	9
5. MONITORING OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS POLICY	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY	10

1. Introduction

“The basic tenets of ethical research are that a researcher should respect the people who provide the data (for example, their right to privacy), and to avoid doing them any harm in the process of collecting, analysing and publishing data (for example, causing any disruptions or stress)”³.

Tipperary ETB commits to upholding ethical research principles, guidelines and standards on, or with, human participants carried out by students, as part of their further education and training (FET) programme.

1.1 Purpose

To provide guidelines to students and staff about ethical principles, conduct and practices for research work. The guidelines are also intended as an important tool to prevent undesirable practice and ensure that research processes and outcomes are robust and responsible.

1.2 Scope

This policy covers FET students' primary research that is used as part of their programme where human participants are involved. This includes research completed for summative assessment purposes but also covers research for formative learning or personal, community or further development.

1.3 Responsibilities for Implementation

Responsibilities for this policy are as follows:

- **Students** are responsible for ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines.
- **FET teachers and tutors** are responsible for student education and awareness of research integrity. Staff also need to have awareness of other provisions (eg data protection) under which sensitive and personal data is collected and used in research.
- **Centre Managers and Programme Coordinators** oversee local implementation, monitoring and evaluation and provide feedback to the appropriate team or department, eg, ETB's FET Senior Management Team (SMT), Development, Support & Quality Department (DSQ).
- The **DSQ** has a role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy and ensuring its compliance with relevant ethical and legal provisions.

³ [Policy on Good Research Practice 1.1.pdf \(tcd.ie\)](#) Accessed 16/05/2024

- The **FET SMT** are responsible for oversight of research integrity, as delegated by the ETB's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- The **ETB's SLT** has executive responsibility for ensuring that this policy fulfils statutory obligations and ethical expectations.

1.4 Other Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Assessment procedures](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [Insurance Indemnity: 'Employers Liability & Public/Products Liability Indemnity Letter to Host Employers'](#)

Note: any specific and external policies and procedures that apply in research settings should be applied and adhered to.

2. Guidelines for Staff and Students

2.1 Ethical Principles

- Commitment to the wellbeing, protection and safety of participants. This includes minimising harm, or risk of harm. Risk refers to potential harm (physical, psychological or social) that may arise from the research.
- Respect for dignity, rights, values (cultural, moral) and welfare of all participants.
- The confidentiality of participants' personal data and information and the privacy of participants must be protected and respected.
- Integrity: the research should be conducted with honesty, transparency, and accountability and uphold academic integrity at all times.

2.2 Training and Supervision

Students engaged in research should receive training on ethical principles, research methods and practices, health and safety, informed consent and any other relevant Tipperary ETB policies that apply.

Teachers, tutors, assessors, supervisors and/or mentors should provide guidance and oversight throughout the research process to ensure that students follow ethical standards and best practices at all times.

Special consideration must be given to protecting the welfare of potentially vulnerable participants. ([See 2.10 Vulnerable Participants](#)).

2.3 Garda Vetting

Students who engage with vulnerable adults or children must have obtained Garda vetting before research work can begin. Some settings may require additional clearance.

2.4 Informed Consent

Students must obtain informed consent from participants before their research activity begins.

Informed consent from legal guardians or authorised representatives is required for vulnerable adults and children.

Informed consent should be voluntary, clear and use accessible language appropriate to the participants and their guardians or representatives.

Information should include the nature and duration of participation and the purpose of the research and methodologies used. It should show how data and information will be stored (ie on an Tipperary-approved ETB platform) and for how long. Confidentiality, anonymity and security measures that will be taken and should be stated along with the right to withdraw at any time. Finally, the right to lodge a concern or make a complaint and contact details of the centre should be included.

2.5 Data Management and Security

Research data and information must be handled with care, ensuring compliance to GDPR, data accuracy and security throughout the research process.

Personal information and sensitive data should be anonymised (eg coded, not student names) whenever possible to protect participants' privacy.

Research data should be stored securely and shared only to the relevant FET staff and QA processes and not retained once the initial purpose has ceased. Secure disposal procedures will apply.

2.6 Respect for Diversity

Students must conduct their research in a way that respects diversity. They must avoid discrimination and bias on age, culture, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

2.7 Reporting

Students are responsible for the accurate and honest reporting of research findings and proper acknowledgement of sources where appropriate eg in assessment work.

2.8 Accountability

Unethical behaviour may have consequences that impact academic or programme progression. Ethical misconduct will be subject to investigation and there may be disciplinary actions or penalties imposed where violations are found.

2.9 Approval

All students involved in research with human participants must secure approval by Tipperary ETB centre or programme-management staff before beginning.

2.10 Vulnerable Participants

Research including children and vulnerable adults is considered moderate to high-risk research. There is an institutional duty of care to vulnerable participants to fully consider and act upon all ethical implications. Therefore, research protocols need to:

- identify and evaluate potential risk, harm or discomfort to participants,
- ensure measures are in place to mitigate potential harm arising from the research,
- ensure any conflicts of interest are managed,
- particular focus on information and consent to include anonymity.

2.11 Research misconduct

Suspected research misconduct must be investigated using transparent, robust and fair processes.

Examples of research misconduct could include:

- Core-research misconduct eg falsification or fabrication of data, plagiarism,
- Research practice misconduct eg harmful or dangerous research methods,
- Data-related misconduct eg bad data management,
- Personal misconduct in the research setting eg inappropriate behaviours.

Investigations should maintain confidentiality and not compromise the welfare of the research participants and use the appropriate policies, procedures and legislation for investigation and evaluation.

Actions and sanctions taken should be proportionate to the misconduct found.

3. Internal Monitoring and Review of this Policy

Tipperary ETB is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy and ensuring its compliance with ethical and any regulatory standards.

The review schedule is shown on the table on page 2.

4. Evidence of Implementation of this Policy

Evidence to confirm implementation of this policy may include, for example:

- Records of meetings, briefing sessions, communications on ethical standards and practices,
- Ethical approval documentation,
- Records of informed consent or participation information-sheets,
- Data handling and storage procedures and protocols,
- Student’s summative assessment evidence demonstrates understanding of consent, privacy, confidentiality,
- Feedback, issues or complaint records.

5. Monitoring of Effectiveness of this Policy

The following can be considered when evaluating the effective implementation of this policy, for example:

- Analysis of feedback, including complaints (from research participants, their guardians/representatives, students, staff etc),
- Review of incidences of issues, violations or complaints,
- Review of current ethical standards and practices,
- Other.

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