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Proposal Writing Workshop
Ethical Considerations

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Definitions: Common Grounds

- Although ethical issues are often situational, contextual, and culturally determined, there are common transcultural ethical principles that your home institution and the potential funder would expect your proposal and the subsequent research to respect. These include:
- Safety (not causing harm to yourself, to others, to the environment, etc)
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Justice
- Confidentiality (where applicable)
- Respect of persons

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Sample expectation from a funder

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"**Ethics policy** The Academy requires the research it funds to be conducted in an ethical manner. The following considerations apply to all proposals: accurate reporting of findings and a commitment to enabling others to replicate results where possible; fair dealing in respect of other researchers and their intellectual property; proper employment conditions for research staff having respect for the provisions of the 'Concordat for Contract Research Staff' and subsequent amendments; honesty to research staff and students about the purpose, methods and intended and possible use of the research and any risks involved; confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents (unless otherwise agreed with research subjects and respondents); and independence and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research. Additionally, proposals may raise one or more of the following considerations: the involvement of human participants; the involvement of human remains (e.g. traceable to living descendants); the use of non-human animals; destructive analysis of historic artefacts; research that may result in damage to the natural or historic environment; and the use of sensitive social, economic or political data. Wherever necessary, appropriate consent should be obtained from or on behalf of participants or others affected by the research. Applicants should indicate whether their proposed research raises any special ethical issues, and whether their application has been approved by the institution's Research Ethics Committee or other relevant authority. Independent researchers without access to formal ethical scrutiny and approval should briefly describe any special ethical issues, and explain how they will be addressed." – British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences

"All research that is carried out by Birkbeck staff and students that involves intervention or interaction with human participants, or the collection and or study of data derived from living human participants requires ethical approval. This is so no matter where the investigations are carried out. Ethical requirements arise from an evolving understanding of the rights and duties of human beings. Ethics are broader than law, though the law can both reflect and clarify ethical duties. School staff are part of a changing social system. They are, therefore, required not only to abide by ethical principles such as justice, truthfulness, confidentiality and respect for persons, but also to attend to the evolving understanding of how these principles are expressed in society at a particular time." –Birkbeck College

Common Areas of Ethical Concern
Academic Integrity/Responsibility

- Acknowledging sources
- Integrity in Reporting data and findings
- Conflict of interest
- The pursuit of objectivity

Safety and Wellbeing of Participants

- Protection from physical harm
- Threats to psychological well being
- Sensitive issues and traumatic experiences
- Intrusiveness
- Sensitivity to needs and expectations of participants
- Psychological impact on researcher

Consent

- Informed consent: participants should know exactly what they are being asked to do, and what the risks are, **before** they agree to take part.
- Documenting consent
- The right to withdraw
- Payment of participants
- Vulnerable populations
- Power relationships and exploitation
- Gatekeepers
- Deception and covert research

Management of Data

- Secure storage of data
- Managed access to data
- Secondary uses of data

Dissemination

- Intellectual property rights
- Cultural copyright
- Acknowledgement of participants and collaborators
- Anonymity
- Confidentiality
- The public exhibition of research outcomes
- Potential harm to the reputation of participants
- Material and other benefits from research

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