

# Glasgow School Of Art

## Research & Knowledge Exchange Ethics Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is committed to producing research and knowledge exchange that is of the utmost rigor and of the highest quality. It is recognised that an ethics policy can be an essential tool in maintaining quality and integrity in research. Furthermore, it is a requirement of almost all funding bodies that ethical considerations relating to all research and knowledge exchange activities are made explicit.

1.2 This policy relates to the School's academic, contract research, administrative, academic support, fundraising staff and all postgraduate students. It also applies to visiting researchers and those with honorary posts who carry out research within GSA. To avoid confusion, we will use the term 'researcher' throughout.

1.3 The GSA Research Ethics Policy should be read in conjunction with the GSA Research Ethics Code of Practice, both of which set out minimum standards all researchers must comply with in executing a programme of research activities.

1.4 Virtually all research undertaken will have ethical implications and as such, will be required to demonstrate that the ethical issues have been identified, considered and appropriate steps taken to address those issues identified.

### 2. Research & Knowledge Exchange

2.1 Research is defined as *a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared* (REF2014, 02.2011, Annex C).

2.2 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 new ideas, images, performances, artifacts 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, devices, products and process, including design and construction (REF2014, 02.2011, Annex C).

2.3 Work undertaken as part of professional practice and executed outwith contractual obligation to GSA is the responsibility of the practitioner. Work of this nature should naturally not be carried out on GSA premises.

2.4 The GSA research ethics policy also applies to pedagogic enquiry and interventions which are beyond the normal agreements for educational purposes between teacher, student and institution. This would constitute harm or distress beyond reasonable expectations.

2.5 The GSA research ethics policy also applies to any research work whose focus is knowledge exchange.

### **3. Obligations and Responsibility of the Researcher**

3.1 All researchers must comply with the GSA Research Ethics Policy, as set out herein. In complying with the policy, the researcher recognises the need for sound ethical consideration in the proposed research undertaken and this implies, that the researcher has also undertaken an assessment of risk in proposing this research.

3.2 Researchers must also comply with the GSA Research Ethics Code of Practice and demonstrate adherence to its principles and recommendations in execution of research.

3.3 It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the appropriate ethical clearance, both within GSA and, if appropriate, with other bodies, has been obtained. Any researcher who fails to do so may be subject to GSA disciplinary procedures and / or be in breach of any legislation pertaining to the work (which could lead to criminal charges being brought).

3.4 Researchers must acquaint themselves with all relevant legislation relating to their research. This includes (but is not limited to), the Data Protection Act (2010), Freedom of Information Act (Scotland, 2002), the Equalities Act (2010), the Computer Misuse Act (1990), the Obscene Publications Act (1964) and all legislation governing working with participants unable to give informed consent, safeguarding children, welfare of animals, uses of human tissue and health and safety regulations. Further information on each can be viewed on the GSA Research Ethics toolkit on the VLE.<sup>1</sup>

3.5 In addition to legislation, researchers must be familiar with relevant GSA policies which are not the preserve of the Research and Graduate School but which nonetheless impact upon research activities, in particular the GSA Health and Safety Policy and Data Protection Policy. Abiding by each of these and any obligations therein is the responsibility of the researcher.

3.6 All Glasgow School of Art researchers must exhibit ethically sound behaviour in the execution of research as part of the Glasgow School of Art, including (but not limited to):

- i) formally acknowledging the contribution and assistance of others (including collaborating partners, colleagues etc);

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) for up to date information

- ii) honouring any contractual agreements, copyrights and the ownership of intellectual property and avoidance of any practice to mislead what is respect of what is presented;
- iii) publishing (regardless of format / vehicle) research to the highest standards of academic integrity and representation;
- iv) independence of research must be clear and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicitly declared by the researcher to GSA via the Research Ethics Sub Committee.

3.7 When conducting research work in collaboration with other institutions, researchers should act in accordance with agreements set out between the research parties, including complying with the rules, regulations and processes of partner organizations where specified. For example, research carried out on NHS premises and/or NHS patients is required to go through NHS ethical procedures laid out by the Department of Health.

#### **4. Ethical issues**

4.1 The following is a list of ethical issues this policy pertains to:

- a. Voluntary participation of research subjects;
- b. Respect for vulnerable persons, human dignity, free & informed consent;
- c. Full disclosure to research subjects (including the purpose of the research, length of time information will be kept for, the nature of its use, confidentiality & security thereof and right to withdraw from participation);
- d. Research free from coercion or deception (including incentives or covert research) paying due heed to the Bribery Act 2010;
- e. Support for research subjects / participants;
- f. Data Protection compliance (including confidentiality, security and destruction of data);
- g. Disclosure Scotland compliance (where required);
- h. Extent to which research could be met with reduced numbers of human subjects;
- i. Extent to which research will achieve its desired aims and not waste time of research subjects;
- j. Animal welfare;
- k. Use of animal or human tissue;
- l. Use of archives, datasets, databases, visual material (e.g photographic or video), internet or social media material;
- m. Harm : Benefit Analysis;
- n. Conflict of interest;
- o. Conservation;
- p. Professional integrity;

- q. Adherence to GSA and any collaborating institutions / organisations ethical policies and procedures as well as local regulations;
- r. Compliance with all legislation related to the research work.

4.2 All research conducted within GSA will incur one or more of the issues outlined above to a greater or lesser extent and requires ethical approval before the research can commence.

## **5. Research Ethics Committee**

5.1 The GSA Research Ethics Committee (REC) is a sub committee of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and meets not less than once per academic term. Meetings will be advertised on the VLE to ensure all applications for ethical approval can be submitted well in advance of work being undertaken.

5.2 The GSA Research Ethics Committee is convened by the Head of Research and Graduate School, and consists of two Senior Researchers and the Research Developer. From time to time representatives from other areas of GSA (such as Human Resources, IT) may be called to participate as well as lay members from outwith GSA who have specialist expertise.

5.3 Members of the Committee are recognised as active researchers in their own right and therefore, will be submitting applications for ethical consideration. In that event, that committee member will absent themselves from the discussion of their own application. A decision will be taken by the remaining members of the Committee.

5.4 The remit of the GSA Research Ethics Committee is:

to oversee questions of ethics as it refers to the development of research and knowledge exchange activities for GSA staff and postgraduate research students.

5.5 To be responsible on behalf of the RKEC for:

- i) establishing and maintaining the research ethics policy;
- ii) establishing an ethics protocol and preliminary review sheet;
- iii) establishing and maintaining best practice on ethical issues in relationship to RCUK standards and NHS as well as other funders;
- iv) Review, recommend and make decisions on any and all ethical issues as they may pertain to research and knowledge exchange activities by staff or postgraduate research students;
- v) Appropriate review, analysis and make recommendations on the REF2014 Code of Practice
- vi) All reporting on matters arising during committee operation.

5.6 Membership of the Research Ethics Sub Committee is restricted to:

- i) Head of Research and Graduate School (Convenor);
- ii) Research Developer and Ethics Coordinator (Deputy Convenor);
- iii) Three research active members of staff, with experience in research and / or knowledge exchange and ethics policy;
- iv) Members of staff from other areas of GSA with relevant expertise such as Human Resources, IT or Library staff.

## 6. Procedures

6.1 The Glasgow School of Art requires that all research & knowledge exchange activities, regardless of nature or funder, complete an ethics form to demonstrate that ethical issues have been considered and identified. The procedure is thus:

6.1.1 All applicants must complete and submit to the Research Developer *Form 1: Preliminary Ethical Assessment Form* at the point of obtaining sign off for a proposed research project. A full copy of the research proposal should also be appended;

6.1.2 Based on the information supplied in Form 1, researchers will be informed whether there are ethical issues which require a full ethical assessment or whether there are no pressing ethical issues and thus, the research can proceed. In the latter instance, Form 1 will be signed off by the Research Developer and Head of Research;

6.1.3 If full ethical assessment is required, researchers will be directed to complete one of the following forms:

- i) *Form 2: Human Participants – non clinical setting*
- ii) *Form 3: Human Participants – clinical / NHS setting*
- iii) *Form 4: Archival research, oral histories and visual research*

Researchers must complete and submit the required form as soon as possible upon receipt of a funding decision and certainly not less than 6 weeks prior to research work commencing. Completed forms should be submitted to the Research Developer in the first instance which will then be forwarded to the members of the GSA Research Ethics Committee for consideration.

6.1.4 If a full application for approval is received prior to a scheduled Committee meeting, approval may be still be obtained. A minimum of Head of Research plus one additional Committee member (therefore a quorum of two) can make a decision via email on the application put forth for consideration.

6.1.5 Committee members will consider the application, make a decision and report the decision via the Research Developer to the applicant. The members may:

- a) approve the application;
- b) reject the application, stating reasons;
- c) request further information or modifications to the application.

6.1.6 In the case of (C), in part 6.1.5 above, the revised application must be submitted through the same procedure.

6.2 Where research is undertaken in collaboration with another institution or organisation outside the School, the ethics policies of those institutions should be appended to *Form 1* at the point of obtaining sign off.

6.3 All forms and documents relating to the GSA Research Ethics procedure can be found on the VLE within the 'Research and Knowledge Exchange' section which all staff are enrolled in. A flowchart of the process is included in Annex A herein.

6.4 The Research Development Team will offer support and assistance to researchers wherever possible in the preparation of ethics approval and in maintaining ethical standards once the research activities are underway. Researchers should not hesitate to get in touch and School Research Committee chairs should direct their researchers to the team wherever possible.

## **7. Reporting**

7.1 As stated, the Research Ethics Committee operates as a sub committee of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and as such, the convenor of the Research Ethics Committee will give a short update at RKEC.

7.2 The Research Developer will report to REC on the number of preliminary research ethics checklist documents which have been submitted during the period between committee meetings and whether these are likely to require full ethical approval. In this manner, workload and planning can be managed as well as ensuring the correct persons are present at future meetings.

7.3 Any reporting which is required on research ethics which could be either internal to GSA or external (e.g. Research Council requirements) will be the responsibility of REC. Where information is requested by REC of researchers, researchers will be informed as quickly as possible and should comply with all requests for information.

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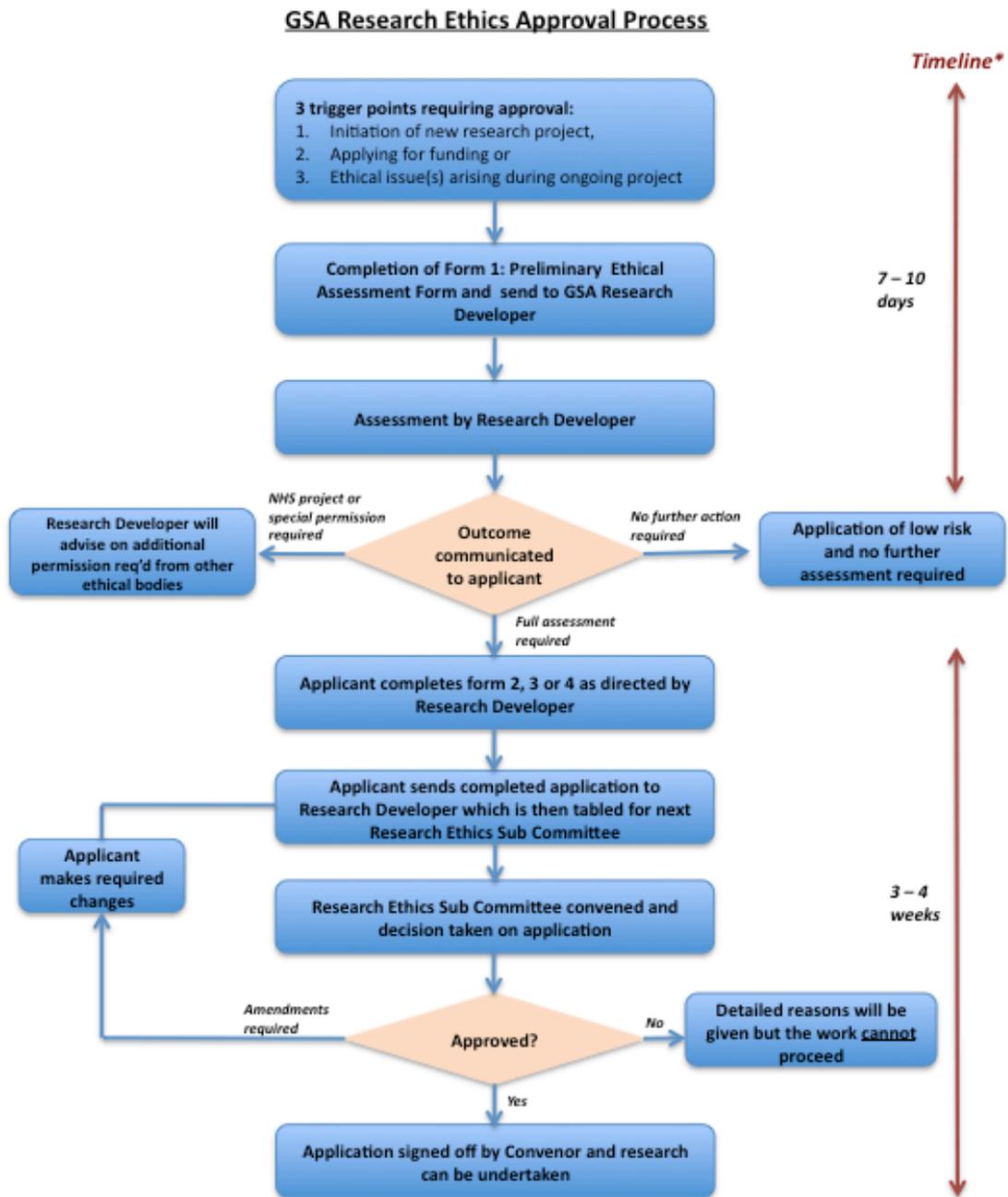
*Authored by: Dr Alison Hay, Research Developer*  
*Date for review: January 2014*

References

In compiling the Research Ethics Policy, the author gratefully acknowledges the following documents

1. GSA Research Ethics Policy 2005
2. University of the Arts London, Code of Practice on Research Ethics
3. University of the Arts London, Guidance for Research Ethics Approval
4. University of Bristol, Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure
5. Oxford Brookes University, Ethics Review Process
6. Oxford Brookes University, What does it mean for me
7. Oxford Brookes University, University Research Ethics Committee (terms of reference)
8. Royal College of Art, Terms of Reference and Membership for the Research and Ethics Committee
9. Department of Health, Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care, 2005
10. ESRC, Framework for Research Ethics

**Annex A: Flowchart illustrating GSA Ethics Process**



*\*This refers to how quickly we will aim to return a decision to applicants. Please get in touch as early as possible to help with scheduling, thank you.*