

RNCM Guidelines on ethical approval for non-practice-based research involving human participation

Please read these guidelines before completing your ethical approval form(s).

All researchers in institutions of higher education are expected to adhere to the [Concordat for Research Integrity](#) (2019). Those who are funded by UK grant-giving bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council, whether directly or indirectly, are bound by the [RCUK Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct](#).

Researchers at RNCM who are undertaking research in areas that can be defined broadly as music education must also adhere to the British Educational Research Association [ethical guidelines](#). Those undertaking research in areas that can be defined broadly as music psychology are bound, in addition, by the British Psychological Society ([BPS](#)) [Code of Human Research Ethics](#).

The main principles of good research conduct, reflected in the application form for ethical approval, are as follows:

- care and avoidance of harm
- honesty and openness
- accountability and appropriate documentation
- confidentiality
- informed consent
- avoidance of conflicts of interest
- compliance with the law and relevant codes of conduct
- due acknowledgement of collaborators, informants, participants or other contributors to the research.

Research involving human participation – definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, research is defined as an original investigation undertaken to gain new insights. Human participation is defined as people taking part in researchers' investigations actively (e.g. as interviewees, respondents to questionnaires and surveys, participants in experiments), passively (e.g. being observed or providing data for analysis), and/or on behalf of others such as 'vulnerable' groups.

Vulnerable groups include infants and children under the age of 18; people with physiological and/or psychological impairments and/or learning disorders; people dependent on the protection or under the control of others (e.g. people in care, young offenders, prisoners); parents of sick children; people with limited knowledge of the English language; people engaged in illegal activities (such as drug-taking).

Aims

The aims of these guidelines are to facilitate research and to enable researchers to reflect on its ethical implications.

Who are these guidelines for?

The guidelines are provided for everyone undertaking research involving human participation at RNCM, including undergraduate students taking electives in music education and music psychology, postgraduate students on taught courses (e.g. MMus), postgraduate students on research degree programmes (e.g. MPhil, PhD), full-time, part-time and visiting members of staff, and researchers external to RNCM undertaking research with the participation of students and/or staff at RNCM.

Completing and submitting applications for ethical approval

As well as completing the appropriate ethical approval form(s), you should also prepare **participant information sheets** and **consent forms** for participants (templates are provided), unless you are undertaking questionnaire research, in which case you are required to include participant information and consent as part of your questionnaire and submit **the questionnaire itself**.

Applications for ethical approval include the ethical approval form(s), participant information sheet(s), consent form(s), interview schedules, additional information if required and questionnaires as appropriate.

When you have completed the application and it has been checked by your research supervisor (if you are a student), line manager or head of department (if you are a member of staff, the ethical approval form should be signed by both parties. Complete applications should be submitted electronically.

Please note that data can be used only for the project for which ethical approval is sought. It must be stored securely for a specified period of time, during which it can only be re-used in subsequent research with the explicit consent of participants, before it is destroyed.