Guidance documents: Research Ethics

Appendix 1: Guidance on Placements and Experience-based Reflections

Appendix 2: Guidance on Informed Consent

Appendix 3: Guidance on Confidentiality and Anonymity

Appendix 4: Guidance on the Conduct of Interviews

Appendix 5: Procedure for Handling Data

Appendix 6: Guidance for Participant Consent Form

Appendix 7: Guidance for Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 1: Guidance on Placements and Experience-based Reflections

Work leading to placement or other experience-based reflections does not generally count as research for the purposes of this policy. Although the student may use encounters with others for their reflections, the emphasis of these forms of assessment is on self-reflection and integrating that with critical theological enquiry. The sources for reflection will primarily include journals, personal stories, evaluation by others of a specific activity with which the student was recently involved, and similar sources, rather than people's personal details. They are less likely to involve what are clearly research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or formal observation of individuals. When they do include such methods, or if there are other reasons to judge that a formal research project is being undertaken, the ethics approval process must be followed.

Appendix 2: Guidance on Informed Consent

All participants in research must give their informed consent to participate. Where specific individuals are invited, their consent should be obtained in writing. Participants must have been informed, in writing, of the nature of the research and their participation in it, of any risks, and of the intended use for any information they give. In this way their consent will be informed, valid, and freely given. The extent of the readership of the final project should also make clear: whether it will be read only by examiners, available to library users, or be published more widely. In addition, permission for the proposed research must also be sought from any institution, school, or church, where the research takes place. Where participants are recruited from clients of a particular service-provider, whether public or private, written permission must be sought from that provider, e.g., NHS, Social Services, or the Prison Service. Where participants under the age of 16 are involved in any research, informed consent must be obtained in writing from their parents or legal guardians. Specific consent must be obtained where interviews or observations are going to be audio or video recorded. The right for a participant to withdraw from the research and withdraw their consent at any time during the phase of the research in which the learners is gathering data must be made clear and the mechanism to do so communicated to the participant.

Appendix 3: Guidance on Confidentiality and Anonymity

- The confidentiality of participants must be respected, particularly with respect to any personal information obtained from them. Participants must be informed, in writing, of how this will be secured.
- Normally, information used in final forms of assessment must be anonymised, along with the details of other identifying information (e.g., the names of local churches or projects). Descriptions of the location of research should be general rather than specific (e.g., referring to 'a church in an industrial district of a large urban city, with very high proportion of racial and religious diversity' rather than 'St Peter's, Moss Side).
- Remember that people may be easily identifiable from their role or details of context. If such factors mean that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, this must be made clear at the point at which consent is obtained.
- Only where express permission has been given by an individual in writing to the use of personally identifiable information being used may it be so.
- If it seems necessary to include in the supporting documentation something such as a church newsletter that will identify the place where the research was undertaken and it is not possible to remove or obscure such details, permission must be obtained from a recognised authoritative body e.g. PCC or incumbent, and from anyone whose character, opinions, etc., feature in the assignment and who can be identified by means of the material in the supporting documentation.
- Assessors of submitted work are bound by the same expectations of confidentiality.
- The submission of work for assessment is distinct from work that will be published. The former has a confidential system of assessment, the latter has a wider public audience. If there is the possibility of publication, participants must be made aware of this in advance of the research beginning, and this possibility must form an explicit part of the consent obtained. If publication becomes a possibility after consents have been obtained, new written consent must be gained.

Appendix 4: Guidance on the Conduct of Interviews

- Act politely and courteously at all times.
- Explain to the interviewee(s) the nature and purpose of your project.
- Explain how the interview is to be used.
- Obtain permission for the interview to be recorded if this will be necessary.
- Clearly set out the scope of confidentiality within the interview.
- Make it clear that the participant can terminate the interview at any time.
- Obtain any consents in writing.

Appendix 5: Procedure for Handling Data

Start of Process: Researchers should first consider how data will be gathered, analysed, and managed and how and in what form relevant data will eventually be made available to others.

Accuracy: Researchers should consider how to maintain the data's accuracy e.g., transcription notes. If there is any doubt about the accuracy of personal or other data, then it should not be used until the accuracy can be confirmed.

Consent: Researchers must obtain from any human participants their informed consent. No participant should be included in the research unless they have their given consent. If appropriate it may be necessary for participants to be given a later opportunity to review their data, e.g., transcripts of interviews, and amend if necessary or to withdraw consent for the use of the data.

Individual Rights: Individuals have, under the General Data Protection Regulations, the right to see all their personal data held by the researcher. It is the individual researcher's responsibility to ensure that GDPR regulations are observed.

Sensitive Data and Security: Any data, files, or other digital or electronic items including audio or video material used or produced in the course of gathering sensitive material must be stored securely. Researchers should not leave records containing personal data unattended in offices or areas accessible to the members of the public. They should ensure that personal data is not displayed on computer screens visible to passers-by. They should be aware that these security considerations also apply to records taken away from St Padarn's e.g., on a laptop to another destination. Data should be anonymised wherever possible to prevent the loss of personal identifiable data.

The Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 outlaw the dissemination of terrorist publications if the individual concerned has the intention to encourage or induce others. Therefore, particular care must be taken to look after research data and materials that fall into this category and any other potentially criminally sensitive material appropriately, and dissemination should be avoided wherever possible. Physical materials such as manuals, reports, or other hard copy documents should be scanned and uploaded to a secure area, and the original hard copy then destroyed. If this is not possible then the material should be kept in a locked filing cabinet or similar.

Review Files: Researchers should only create and retain personal data where absolutely necessary. They should securely dispose of or delete any personal data that is out of date, irrelevant or no longer required. It is good practice to hold regular reviews of files and discard unnecessary or obsolete data systematically.

Retention: Subject to any legal, ethical, or other requirements, data should be kept intact for any legally specified period and otherwise for the following length of time from the end of the project: e.g., 1 year for undergraduate studies, 2 years for postgraduate taught studies, and six years for level 8 studies.

Disposal of Records: When discarding paper records that contain personal data, they should be treated confidentially (i.e., shred such files rather than disposing of them as wastepaper). Similarly, any unnecessary or out-of-date electronic records should be deleted.

Third Parties: Personal data should never be revealed to third parties without the consent of the individual concerned or other reasonable justification. This includes parents, guardians, relatives, and friends of the data subject who have no right to access information without the data subject's consent. Personal data can only be legitimately disclosed to third parties for purposes connected with a learner's studies and to meet statutory or legal requirements, but only where St Padarn's is satisfied regarding the enquirers' identity and the legitimacy of the request. Researchers should also maintain confidentiality where undertakings have been made to other third parties, organisations or to protect intellectual property rights. Learners should also ensure, so far as is practicably possible, that they do not reveal unnecessary details of their subjects that are of an identifiable nature to their supervisors or to other members of the St Padarn's community.

Appendix 6: Guidance for Participant Consent Form

Participant Identification Code (if appropriate):

Title of Project:

Researcher Name:

Supervisor Name (if appropriate):

Please read and sign:
(Additional information should be included as appropriate, e.g. 'I agree to the interview being audio recorded).

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet about the above-named project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time prior to the research project being written up, without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in this project.

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Participants will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the researcher.

Appendix 7: Guidance for Participant Information Sheet

Potential participants in your research should be given sufficient information to allow them to decide whether or not they wish to take part. The information you give should be written in clear, non-technical language that is easy to understand. You should include the following information:

1. Study Title

Give the title of your study. If it contains technical terms or is not self-explanatory to a lay person, you should include a brief explanation.

2. Invite Participation

A brief paragraph inviting the person to take part. For example:
You are being invited to take part in a research study. In order to help you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. You may wish to discuss it with others. For any further information or questions about my research, please contact me on: XXXX

3. Provide Brief Information on the Aims and Purpose of the project

4. Explain why the Person has been Chosen and who else will take part

5. Informed Consent

The potential participant should be told that participation is entirely voluntary. For example:
You are free to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do wish to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. It is usually not practical to withdraw after the research project has been written up. If you take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be given a copy of it to keep.

6. Information about what the Research will Involve

Clear description of what the participant will be asked to do, giving an idea of how much time it will take. You should give information about your research method, e.g., interview or focus group.

7. Information about any Risks or Benefits for the Participant

Risks - for example if your interview addresses potentially painful personal issues which may affect the participant's well-being, you should alert them to this possibility, and provide information about who they should contact for support if this happens.
Benefits - for example, your research might provide an opportunity to contribute to our understanding of some issue. Do not exaggerate the benefits if none are obvious.

8. Confidentiality

You should provide information about the limits of confidentiality and the security of information. Provide specific details of how confidentiality will be maintained and who is likely to have access to personal information and data, e.g., supervisors, internal and external examiners. Do not provide promises of absolute confidentiality as others may have limited access to data in order to mark / review the project, but state that every effort will be made to provide as much confidentiality as possible. Under normal circumstances no-one else should have access to the participant's details or data. Confidentiality includes the fact of the person's participation as well as their data. Only in exceptional circumstances might personal details or raw data need to be shared.

9. Data

Provide information about what will happen to the information you collect and any participant details; how and where it will be presented, who is likely to read it and whether surveys or interviews will be destroyed after the assessment has been marked. Inform the participant of the extent to which they may or may not be identifiable. If data is to be retained after the end of the project, you must give clear information about how and why this will happen.

10. Further information

Provide the contact details for yourself and your supervisor (if appropriate) for the potential participant to contact if they require further information and would like to take part. Refer the potential participant to the St Padarn's Research Ethics Policy and tell them where this can be viewed.

Thank the potential participant for considering taking part.

Participants must be given a copy of the information sheet and a copy of the signed, dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the researcher.