

SPI Research Ethics Policy



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SPI Research Ethics Policy

This document defines the standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at St Padarn's Institute including both staff and learners on programmes validated by Cardiff University, Durham University, and the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

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2. Introduction

- 2.1** This Research Ethics Policy prescribes the standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all staff and learners engaged in research at St Padarn's Institute and the consequences should non-compliance be suspected. For the avoidance of doubt, it includes all learners who are undertaking independent learning projects and/or dissertations which involve research involving human participants.
- 2.2** This policy has been written on the understanding that researchers recognise that academic integrity in research, as with any other academic undertaking, includes the requirement to avoid plagiarism, poor citation practice, collusion, cheating, contract cheating, or other similar offences which are explained in full in the St Padarn's Academic Misconduct Policy. This policy, therefore, focuses on the ethical issues raised by research topics which might be classified as 'sensitive', involve human participation, a potential or actual conflict of interest for the researcher, and any other ethical concern. It also sets out the procedures which should be followed to ensure due ethical consideration is given to an application when any of the above concerns exists.
- 2.3** There is much activity carried out by learners, especially in placements and professional contexts, which does not count as research for the purposes of this policy, for example asking people to fill in sermon feedback forms or writing a reflection on a pastoral visit. Nevertheless, these activities may still have ethical implications, and these are dealt with in the guidance documents provided by the Research Ethics Committee.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1** All research undertaken under the auspices of St Padarn's must meet the statutory requirements. Of particular relevance is the Equality Act (2010), as well as the Human Rights Act (1998), the General Data Protection Regulation, The Counter Terrorism Security Act 2015, and the requirement for Disclosure & Barring Service clearance for those working with children and provision within the existing legal framework for those working with vulnerable adults.
- 3.2** Where applicable, researchers should also comply with any research ethics guidelines set out by their professional associations, or funding bodies. This may include ethical review applications from those bodies and conformity with any other audited compliance regulations (e.g., NHS National Research Ethics Service review).

3.3 This policy has been developed in accordance with the following regulations, policies, and procedures. This list is not exhaustive:

- St Padarn's Academic Misconduct Policy
- Academic Programme Handbooks
- Academic Quality Handbook, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David
- Academic Regulations, Cardiff University
- Common Awards Research Ethics Policy
- St Padarn's IT Policy
- St Padarn's Prevent Policy
- St Padarn's Equality and Diversity Policy
- St Padarn's Learners' Data Protection Policy
- St Padarn's Learning Support Policy
- St Padarn's Disciplinary Policy for Learners

4. Definitions

4.1 Research is defined as: the systematic investigation into, and study of, materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. It applies to both research conducted by staff on behalf of St Padarn's, and personal research undertaken by staff and others visiting or working at St Padarn's (e.g., external Library users and other users of St Padarn's sites). Finally, it applies to learners' examined work e.g., the submission and assessment of a thesis, dissertation, essay, or other coursework.

4.2 Researchers are defined as: all learners, all members of staff, including those members of St Padarn's who are conducting research overseas, and those who are not members of Padarn's (visitors) but who are conducting research on St Padarn's premises or using St Padarn's facilities.

4.3 Misconduct in Research:

4.3.1 Misconduct in Research is defined as: actual or attempted acts of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or deception when proposing, conducting, or reporting results of research, or deliberate, dangerous, reckless, or negligent deviations from

accepted practices in carrying out research. It includes failure to follow established protocols if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, and facilitating of Misconduct in Research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. It also includes the intentional or reckless unauthorised use, disclosure, or removal of, or damage to, research-related property of one's own or of another, including apparatus, materials, writings, data, hardware or software or any other substances or devices used in or produced by the conduct of research.

4.3.2 Misconduct in Research does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation, or judgement in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to the research process.

4.4 Supervisors and Participants

4.4.1 Supervisors are defined as those designated with the specific responsibility for supporting the researcher during the research process.

4.4.2 Human Participants are defined as those who aid the researcher in obtaining their research data by, for example, completing questionnaires, allowing themselves to be observed, and/or be interviewed.

5. Safeguarding

Where research includes the participation of children or vulnerable adults, researchers must have received an enhanced disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is a key requirement.

Interviews (including both face-to-face and online interviews) with children, young people under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults, whether individually or in a group must never be conducted by the interviewer alone or in the case of vulnerable adults without appropriate oversight. A responsible adult such as a parent, carer, or teacher must be present. It is the responsibility of students to ascertain and adhere to the safeguarding guidelines of the Church in Wales or other context in which research is conducted. Any commitment to confidentiality made to participants does not obviate the need to follow safeguarding guidelines.

6. Ethical Research Code of Practice

St Padarn's works to create and maintain a culture of research that fosters and supports honesty in conducting academic research at any level. St Padarn's commits to playing its part in achieving this goal and expects researchers and supervisors to do likewise.

6.1 Researchers

St Padarn's therefore expects all researchers to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of their research. In seeking to achieve such high standards, researchers have a responsibility to:

- 6.1.1** always consider and manage the real, perceived, or potential ethical implications of their research, following the procedures in this document or those of other relevant authorities. Researchers therefore have an obligation to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with [St Padarn's Code of Conduct](#) and in compliance with the law.
- 6.1.2** demonstrate integrity and professionalism, fairness and equity, and intellectual honesty; they should therefore be honest in proposing, conducting, and reporting research; maintaining independence and impartiality in obtaining and handling data, the accuracy and reliability of research data and results and acknowledge the contributions of others when publishing and disseminating results and neither engage in misconduct nor conceal it.
- 6.1.3** comply with ethical and legal obligations as required by all relevant statutory and regulatory authorities, including seeking ethical review and approval for research projects as appropriate.
- 6.1.4** as far as possible, ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all those associated with the research.
- 6.1.5** obtain informed written consent by all participants. Sufficient information should be given to participants to ensure that they understand what the research involves, procedures to ensure confidentiality, and understand that they can withdraw from participating in the research at any point.
- 6.1.6** maintain confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents (unless explicit consent is given to the contrary).
- 6.1.7** ensure that research should conform to data protection legislation and [The Church in Wales \(or any other relevant authority\) Data Protection Policy](#), concerning the storage, sharing, and disposal of personal data obtained during research.
- 6.1.8** effectively and transparently manage any conflicts of interest, whether actual or potential, reporting these to the appropriate authority, as necessary.
- 6.1.9** recognise their accountability to the supervisor, participants, and St Padarn's for the conduct of their research.

6.2 Supervisors

St Padarn's expects all supervisors to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in supporting others in their research. In seeking to achieve such high standards supervisors have a responsibility to provide adequate and timely support within the time frames required by St Padarn's.

- assist the researcher to manage the potential ethical implications of their research and to follow the procedures in this document or those of other relevant authorities.
- offer the researcher advice on how to follow best research practice and maintain standards of integrity in all aspects of their research.
- monitor the researcher's compliance with ethical and legal obligations.
- as far as possible, ensure the health, safety and well-being of the researcher and themselves.
- maintain the anonymity of information about research participants and other subjects of research divulged in the course of their supervision.
- ensure their own records on research supervision conform to Data Protection legislation and the [Church in Wales Data Protection Policy](#), concerning the storage, sharing, and disposal of personal data obtained in carrying out their supervisory role.
- declare to the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee any personal conflicts of interest that may arise in carrying out their supervisory role.
- be alert to, and if appropriate report, any allegations of misconduct in research, whether witnessed or suspected.

6.3 Handling of Data

- 6.3.1** Researchers should collect data accurately, efficiently, and according to the agreed design of the research project and ensure that it is stored in a secure and accessible form, in compliance with all legal, ethical, or research-funder requirements, especially data protection legislation.
- 6.3.2** Researchers should maintain the confidentiality of those providing data where undertakings have been made to third parties.
- 6.3.3** Researchers should respect and protect the intellectual property rights of all third parties.
- 6.3.4** The authorship of all third-party data should be acknowledged and correctly cited in accordance with a recognised referencing system.

6.3.5 If research data is to be deleted or destroyed, either because its agreed period of retention has expired or for legal or ethical reasons, it should be done so in accordance with St Padarn's procedures and/or any other legal, or research funder requirements and with particular concern for confidentiality and security.

7. Reasons for Seeking Research Ethical Review/Approval

The ethical review and approval process enables provision to be put in place to mitigate risks generated by undertaking the research. Any research involving the following (or involving any other real, perceived, or potential ethical risk not listed here) requires ethical consideration and ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee must be sought.

7.1 Sensitive Research

Sensitive research encompasses a wide variety of research topics, but there are broad research areas which would usually cause the research to be classified as 'sensitive':

- research into illegal activities, including the collection of source data, e.g., crime statistics.
- research which requires access to web sites normally prohibited on St Padarn's servers; including, but not limited to; pornography, gambling, or the sites of any of the organisations proscribed by the UK Government.
- research into extremism and radicalisation.
- research that might put the subjects of the research at personal risk if findings of the research became widely known.

Sensitive research should be initiated and continued only if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee may seek specialist advice from within the Church in Wales on any matter relating to complex applications, safeguarding, insurance, liability, or the legal implications of an application. Advice may be sought from, but is not limited to, the Head of Legal Services, the Head of Communications and Technology, or the Director of Safeguarding.

7.1.1 It is recognised that academics and learners will have occasional need to access content that may be blocked to conduct sanctioned research, or material which would usually be deemed inappropriate. Users can apply for temporary "whitelisting"

of blocked sites to the Head of Communications & Technology. The application must be supported by written confirmation from the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

7.1.2 St Padarn's does not permit any illegal activities in the course of research. However, it recognises that there is a distinction between what is illegal and what is legal but potentially unsafe. Therefore, each research project which comes in this category will be carefully considered and its legality assessed before permission is given to proceed. While St Padarn's endorses the principle of academic freedom and supports its researchers in undertaking ambitious, rigorous, and challenging research it has a legal obligation to monitor all research and to report illegal activity where appropriate. Conversely, in order to protect researchers from misinterpretation of intent by authorities and subsequent investigations, any researcher engaged in sensitive research must put in place measures to mitigate risks to all involved in such research.

7.1.3 Similarly, St Padarn's takes seriously its duty, under the Security and Counter Terrorism Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism on its campus (see [St Padarn's Prevent Policy](#)), whether by oral, visual, written, or other means. Researchers should be aware that extremist and terrorist-related websites may be under surveillance by law enforcement agencies. Visiting such websites and/or downloading security-sensitive materials, particularly if they are terrorism-related, can be viewed by them as prosecutable offences if it is considered that the intent is illegal. Therefore, in order to protect researchers from misinterpretation of intent by authorities and subsequent investigations, the researcher must ensure that St Padarn's can put specific protocols in place to mitigate risks to all involved in such research. It also enables St Padarn's to explain to outside authorities, if required, that researchers are engaged in authorised research work.

7.2 Human Participation

7.2.1 Human participation is defined as: direct involvement through non-invasive procedures, such as interviews, questionnaires, surveys, observation; indirect involvement through access to personal information; and/or involvement requiring consent on behalf of others, such as by parents for a child participant under the age of 18 or a carer for a vulnerable adult e.g. elderly people, physically or mentally ill people, people with additional learning needs, people in care, bereaved people, and people in prison.

7.2.2 The process of applying for research ethical review/approval allows the researcher and St Padarn's to consider whether the research has the potential to harm the dignity, rights, safety and/or wellbeing of any of the human participants including themselves or the environment.

7.2.3 Research involving human participants should be initiated and continued only if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved.

7.3 Conflict of Interest

7.3.1 Conflict of interest is defined as research in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, a researcher's professional judgment in conducting or reporting research.

7.3.2 St Padarn's and researchers must comply with all legal and ethical requirements relevant to their study. They should declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest relating to research and where necessary take steps to declare and resolve them through the procedures in section 8 below.

8. Procedures for Applying for Research Ethical Review/Approval

8.1 Procedure for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assignments

8.1.1 It is the Module Leader's responsibility to identify any potential ethical considerations when setting assignments and putting a management plan in place to mitigate risks. However, learners should also be aware of any potential ethical considerations in all their academic work.

8.1.2 At the start of each term, Module Leaders should submit their assignment questions to the Programme Leader with, where appropriate, a statement declaring any potential ethical risk posed by the question and how they propose to mitigate the identified risk(s).

8.1.3 The Module Leader will continue to support the learner(s) as necessary throughout the research process, in conjunction with other staff as appropriate.

8.2 Procedure for Negotiated Study Modules and Dissertation

8.2.1 Learners may choose to engage in a Negotiated Study Module and Dissertation as part of their studies. They must follow the policy and procedures outlined in this document when working on them.

8.2.2 Learners are responsible for the content of their research.

- 8.2.3** It is the learner's responsibility to identify any potential ethical considerations when selecting a research topic and, during this process, they must consider how to mitigate and manage any potential risks involved.
- 8.2.4** The Supervisor will consider the potential ethical issues related to the proposed research and can advise whether an application for ethical approval should be submitted. It remains the learner's responsibility to make an application for ethical approval.
- 8.2.5** Research that requires ethical approval may not begin until the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee has formally communicated approval to the researcher. Failure to abide by this rule may result in an investigation for academic misconduct.
- 8.2.6** It is the responsibility of the learner to submit a revised application for ethical approval if the proposed research changes.
- 8.2.7** When submitting the paper for marking evidence of the award of ethical approval should be included.

8.3 Procedures for Staff

- 8.3.1** Staff members should be aware at all times of any potential ethical implications of their research and arrange appropriate approval from the Research Ethics Committee.
- 8.3.2** Staff must consult the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee in all cases if learners are researching a sensitive issue that has the potential to be viewed as criminal. The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee will approve a suitable management and monitoring plan to ensure the protection of the researcher and St Padarn's.

8.4 Procedures for Visitors

- 8.4.1** Visitors should be aware at all times of any potential ethical implications of their research and arrange appropriate supervision from a member of St Padarn's staff where necessary.
- 8.4.2** Visitors must consult the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee if they are researching a sensitive issue that has the potential to be viewed as criminal. The Chair will ensure a suitable management and monitoring plan has been put in place to ensure the protection of the researcher and St Padarn's.

9. Approval Process for Research involving an Ethical Dimension: The St Padarn's Research Ethics Committee

9.1 The St Padarn's Research Ethics Committee considers applications for research ethics approval from staff, visitors, and learners.

9.2 Applications should be submitted using the Research Ethics Application Form and be supported by such documents that will enable the committee to reach a decision. (See the [guidance documents](#) produced by the Research Ethics Committee for an exemplar [Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form](#)).

9.3 The St Padarn's Research Ethics Committee will either grant approval for the research, request additional information from the applicant or reject the application.

9.4 Research that requires ethical approval may not begin until the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee has formally communicated approval to the researcher.

9.5 If a member of staff, visitor, or learner is dissatisfied with the decision of the St Padarn's Research Ethics Committee then they may appeal that decision by writing, within 30 days of receiving the committee's decision, to the Principal outlining their concern. The decision of the Principal is final.

10. Misconduct in Research

10.1 Failure to comply with the Research Ethics Policy may give rise to an allegation of misconduct.

10.2 [St Padarn's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure](#) will be used for all learners of St Padarn's.

10.3 The [Representative Body of the Church in Wales Disciplinary Policy](#) will be used for staff members.

10.4 In the case of Visitors, the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee or his/her representative will contact the visitor's supervisor and/or the university which will be validating their research, so that they can consider initiating their own investigation. St Padarn's will facilitate but not usually lead such an investigation unless mutually agreed by all parties, in which case the procedure to be used will be agreed at that time.

10.5 For students registered on programmes validated by Durham University only: This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Common Awards policy on Academic Misconduct: Research Ethics](#), which sets out the procedure to be followed in cases where a suspicion arises that a student has not followed their TEI's Research Ethics Policy when pursuing academic assignments for a Common Awards module.

11. Responsibilities, Policy Approval and Review

11.1 This document, as well as all other policy, procedure and guidance documents relating to those studying at St Padarn's will be available to all, monitored regularly and reviewed periodically.

11.2 The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee has overall responsibility for the Research Ethics Policy, including its approval and regular review.

12. Policy Communication

12.1 This document, and all other policy and procedure documents mentioned in this policy, can be found at St Padarn's website: www.stpadarns.ac.uk.

12.2 Every effort will be made to respond to any request to provide this policy in a different format.

12.3 This policy will be included in staff and student induction.