

Ethical Considerations for Institutional Research

The University recognises that Institutional research (IR) works within a complex space and can involve many different departments, participants, and researchers. There is the potential, due to this complexity, for ethical clearance to fall outside the faculty-based processes and procedures. It has been identified that potentially two main areas may be missed: Institutional Research; and Insider research, practitioner researcher and work-based research.

Institutional Research within the University of Wolverhampton

The Frascati Manual (OECD 2015) definition of research should be considered and applied:

“Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge.

General exclusions include:

- *education and training other than PhD research*
- *general purpose data collection (such as recording weather statistics)*
- *routine testing and analysis of materials, components, products, processes, etc.*
- *feasibility studies*
- *policy-related studies*
- *phase IV of clinical trials (unless they result in a further scientific or technological advance)”.*

IR can include pedagogic research, educational research and/or scholarship of learning and teaching if the work could provide evidence for strategic decision making and enhancement.

IR can be conducted by anyone within the University including academic faculties and professional services. Areas that might come under IR could include the following examples:

- Retention, progression and achievement
- Equality and diversity
- The student experience e.g. where primary data are being collected outside of external surveys or where there are requests for access to institutional data that are not in the public domain.

Approval would be needed for externally-funded research sited and using data from within the university related to, for example, the student experience or learning and teaching, including research where the university is a partner or participant in a collaborative project.

Insider research, practitioner researcher and work-based research.

In addition to the definition of IR, consideration needs to be given as to how ethical approval is granted for someone who is undertaking research and/or scholarship within the University of Wolverhampton related to insider research (i.e. research that might be covered in IR, but which is undertaken as an individual or team and is not linked to publication and dissemination rather than strategic enhancement). Given the GDPR and data protection laws it is important that insider research goes through an ethics process and also provides assurance that compliance with Data Collection requirements are met.

Costley and Gibbs (2006:92) suggest that there is an ethical ‘duty of care’ where the research is sited within a person’s place of work, as the practitioner may have privileged access to information and data.

“Practitioner researchers find themselves in various different contexts within particular professions and/or communities, where there are likely to be ethical implications that they have a responsibility to recognise and understand”.

When undertaking a Professional Doctorate, employees of the University as students would be expected to go through an ethical process likely to include a learning contract or ethics form that clarifies that approval has been

given by the place of work and the site of the research agreeing to that research taking place. There needs to be a similar expectation for all scholarship and research related to the business of the University and its stakeholders.

“It involves a ‘real-world’ consideration of our interaction with others, and an examination of the context of the research which informs and constructs the social realities of the situation and the identities of practitioner researchers and researched.” Costley and Gibbs (2006:96)

There is a duty of care to consider ethical issues for the employer, the University, colleagues, students and other stakeholders who may be involved with or impacted by the research and/or scholarship undertaken. While some internal research across the university does seek ethical approval via the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing (FEHW) School of Education this includes for example, learning, teaching and assessment, the student experience, careers and employment.

Further Guidance is available from The Chair of the Education Ethics Professor Diana Bannister and Professor Megan Lawton Director of the LEAD Team (Learning Enhancement and Academic Development) in the Directorate of Students and Education. Dianabannister@wlv.ac.uk or M.J.Lawton@wlv.ac.uk