

Further & Higher Education Research Ethics Policy 2025-28

APPROVED BY SELT ON June 2025

Applies to:	
Harrogate College	
Keighley College	
Leeds City College	
Leeds Conservatoire	X
Leeds Sixth Form College / Pudsey Sixth Form College	
Luminate Group Services	
University Centre Leeds	X

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

For the purpose of this Policy, University Centre Leeds, Leeds Conservatoire, and Leeds City College will be known as 'The Provider'. Engagement in research activities is critical for furthering knowledge about the further and higher education sectors and promoting evidence-based practices across the Provider. As an institution of teaching, learning, and care, the Provider has a responsibility to develop policies that enable responsible research while safeguarding ethical standards and institutional integrity. The policy defines expectations and governance structures for research projects associated with the Provider. By providing clear guidance to inform acceptable processes and behaviours, this policy seeks to foster excellence in scholarship and secure trust in the voice and actions of our institutions. With a thoughtful framework for oversight in place, our staff can confidently pursue the expansion of knowledge through research initiatives aligned with the Group's objectives and values, and our learners can benefit from a rich culture of knowledge exchange and inquiry. The Provider is responsible for the academic standards, quality, and ethical practice of the programmes it designs and delivers and is accountable for:

- Providing research ethics procedures and guidelines that are clear, accessible, and compliant with the requirements of the awarding body.
- Ensuring consistent implementation of research ethics procedures and principles for all awards.
- Evaluating how academic standards, ethical principles, and professional conduct are maintained throughout all research activities to encourage effective learning and a high-quality learning experience.
- Ensuring the External Examiner feedback is utilised effectively to inform future research practice and enhancements to processes.

2. PURPOSE

This policy sets forth ethical, legal and social guidelines for research conducted at or affiliated with Luminate Education Group. It promotes integrity in research and safeguards the wellbeing of human and animal participants, as well as researchers. Following the guidelines in this policy supports the Providers' academic freedom and upholds public confidence in responsible research practices.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, students or external organisations who conduct or participate in any and all research associated with Luminate Education Group's institutions.

Types of research covered include:

- Practitioner research initiatives
- Externally sponsored or contracted research
- Personal research affiliated with or making use of Provider resources
- Student research projects, dissertations and theses

4. POLICY AIMS/OBJECTIVES

This policy applies to all staff and students who contribute to research at The Provider, and they are responsible for ensuring that all research is conducted in accordance with this policy. The aim of this policy and associated procedures is to ensure researchers interact with people and groups in a way that is ethical and respectful, and that they follow best practices for conducting and sharing research. Informed by the policy, associated research ethics procedures will be implemented consistently across institutions. All research must be conducted according to the requirements of awarding bodies and the standards and obligations of ethical, legal, and professional frameworks.

5. DEFINITIONS

Research is defined in this policy as:

- The creation and understanding of new knowledge, facts, and insights through systematic enquiry.
- Work of direct relevance to the needs of industry, commerce, and to the public, education, and voluntary sectors.
- The invention and generation of ideas, images, performance, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights.
- The use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, and processes, including design and construction.

Participant: An individual who has given informed consent as defined in the 'Informed Consent' section of this policy and voluntarily participates in research, either as the recipient of a test article or as a control.

Human subject: Any living person from which a researcher obtains data through an interaction or is identifiable through private data, either as an experimental subject or as a control, without the person's full knowledge or consent. This includes some covert, deception, or observational studies. All research which involves a human subject who does not provide consent must go through formal ethical review.

6. PRINCIPLES

6.1. *Integrity, Propriety, and Legal Compliance*

Research should be designed, reviewed, and undertaken with adherence to standards of integrity, ethical propriety, and legal compliance.

6.2. *Partiality and Public Good*

Any conflicts of interest or partiality must be disclosed, and the independence of research must be clear. The publication of research results must be conducted fairly and with the public good taking precedence over private.

6.3. *Safety and Protection of Rights*

Research must avoid harm to all research participants, researchers, non-participating members of the public, and the environment. This includes the protection of the rights, safety, dignity, and wellbeing of all participants.

6.4. *Informed Consent*

Research participants must normally be informed as fully as possible about the purpose, intended uses, and methods of the research including what their participation entails, and any risks and benefits involved. The information should be accurate, clear, and easily understood by the potential participant, who should have the capacity to understand what is involved in their participation. When vulnerable participants are involved in research, ethical and legal protocols must be followed. If

there are legitimate reasons not to obtain consent, this must be approved via formal ethical review.

6.5. Voluntary Participation

Participants must willingly take part in the research without coercion or prejudicial inducements. Ethical scrutiny is required for payments or incentives, considering socio-cultural contexts. Researchers should consult locally for guidance on compensation. Participants must be informed of their right to withdraw at any time during data collection, with clear limitations on withdrawal after data collection, especially for anonymized data. Detailed information about the research must be provided in advance, except in deception or covert studies, allowing participants time to ask questions. Withholding information that affects willingness to participate is unethical.

6.6. Participant Anonymity, Confidentiality and Data Protection

Participant anonymity and the information they provide must be respected, unless illegal behaviour is discovered. Participants have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998 and Luminate's Data Protection Policy and Guidelines. Participants' identity or any information that could reveal their identity must not be released without their prior consent. Procedures should be followed for protecting the privacy of participants or subjects and may include:

- Only collecting the minimum information necessary from participants and subjects.
- Using unique identifiers or pseudonyms instead of names where appropriate.
- Storing all data in a locked/encrypted file on approved data storage media.
- Ensuring any removable storage media (e.g. USB drives or laptops) are encrypted.
- Carefully disposing of all paper documents containing personal information in a way that protects participants' identity, e.g. by cross-cut shredding.
- Securing confidentiality statements from all researchers.
- Destroying audio and video tapes on completion of research, or as appropriate to the circumstances; transcripts with anonymised or de-identified participants should be kept.
- All researchers should complete appropriate Information Security and Data Protection online training.
- The collection and storage of data by researchers must comply with the Data Protection Act (1998) and any Luminate data management policies.
- Research data and methods of analysis should be transparent and open to scrutiny without prejudicing participants' rights to confidentiality.
- Researchers do not need to obtain consent from participants for anonymised secondary data being used that is in the public domain, e.g. Standard Assessment Tests.
- In research projects where participants' personal data is collected, researchers must detail in their ethics application the date by which the identifiable personal details of participants will be destroyed. The research data itself is not required to be destroyed.

7. SPECIFIC RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

7.1. Research using social media

- Researchers must consider the privacy rights of the human subjects or participants involved in the research.
- Researchers must understand and comply with the terms and conditions of the social media provider.
- Research using social media websites involving interactions with the posting individual is considered research involving human subjects and requires formal ethical review.
- Researchers intending to access information that is not publicly available must seek permission and obtain consent from the participant prior to doing so. This includes

“friending” or “following” an individual with the intention of gaining access to information and collection of data for research.

7.2. Research with children and vulnerable details:

All research involving children and vulnerable adults should be subject to full ethical review and validating partners guidance. Students undertaking placement should follow the HE Student Placement Policy and associated Safeguarding procedures.

7.3 Research involving animals

Research involving animals will be subject to enhanced ethical review to ensure their safety and wellbeing is not adversely affected by any research conducted. This review will take into account relevant guidance from the UK Home Office, namely in respect of the 3Rs; Replacement, Reduction and Refinement, though it is important to note that the provider does not hold a Home Office Licence and has no plans to apply for one. **Work involving live animals which would require such a licence does not take place at this institution.**

The provider permits the use of animals in research only when the work is addressing a legitimate question and when there is no risk of pain or suffering to the animal(s) involved. Animals being housed for any purpose must be cared for with the highest standards of husbandry, and where animals are being observed in their natural habitat, care must be taken not to damage or otherwise perturb their environment. Activities involving animals should be planned with the welfare of the animals in mind, including the protection of the environment in which they live and the mitigation of any potential distress to the animal. Anyone involved in the care and handling of animals must be properly trained and fully aware of the legal and ethical issues involved.

7.4 HE Access and Participation research

As part of our regulation with the Office for Students, the Provider produces Access and Participation plans at both University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire which sets out our commitments to supporting underrepresented and disadvantaged students.

Research forms an integral part of this work and operates under legitimate interest guidelines, so data collection may operate on an opt-out basis. All evaluation conducted as part of Access and Participation initiatives will follow the guidelines set out in this policy.

Any research conducted for Access and Participation should be agreed upon by the Access and Participation Team must align with the targets set in the current plan cycle. We may use an external provider to conduct research for Access and Participation, where this is the case a GDPR-compliant data sharing agreement will be in place.

8. PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

Informed by the principles of this policy, respective providers will provide appropriate research ethics review processes to be approved at the relevant local committee level.

9. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

The Provider requires that all members of staff involved in either their own research or that of students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Research Supervisors will be appropriately qualified, trained and meet the requirements of the awarding body, and the standards and obligations of the related regulator and appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks.

10. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS OF AWARDING AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES

The Provider requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies and, where appropriate, professional bodies. The Provider has developed appropriate internal policies and procedures that cover major requirements.

The Provider will seek to ensure that, where applicable, other educational providers, workplace and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of learners.

11. RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

11.1. *Definitions of Research Misconduct*

Non-compliance with the Research Ethics Policy, whether deliberate, reckless or negligent, will usually be deemed as research misconduct. Examples may include:

- Failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
- Deception in relation to research proposals
- Unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research participants
- Unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially
- Deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment
- Fabrication, falsification, corruption or inappropriate disclosure of research data
- Distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
- Deliberate misinterpretation of results
- Publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
- Plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- Misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
- Inappropriate attribution of authorship
- Fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
- Attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- Inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
- Collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others.
 - For the purpose of this document harm means a physical or psychological negative effect experienced by a living entity, i.e. person, animal or environment.
 - For the purpose of this document, risk means a relative potential for harm to occur.
 - For the purpose of this document, hazard means a practice or object that can cause potential harm.

12. BREACH OF THE POLICY

- Cases of gross ethical research misconduct by staff or students will be dealt with under our validating partners or Providers Academic or Research Misconduct Policy and could lead to dismissal or expulsion.
- All members of staff, students, research students and researchers are encouraged to report any case of ethical misconduct.

13. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Provider will regularly monitor and review this policy and its associated procedures to ensure continued adherence to ethical, legal and professional frameworks and assess the effectiveness of its implementation and outcomes.

14. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the Luminate Policy on Valuing Diversity and with consideration of assessment guidelines set out by awarding bodies and Designated Quality Bodies (DQB) where appropriate and the Quality Code 2024.

The Provider is committed to:

- Ensuring appropriate consideration for specialist research facilities and equipment for students with disabilities
- Providing clear and timely information for students on research ethics procedures in relation to candidates with disabilities and candidates who require special consideration
- Ensuring that research ethics procedures provide equal opportunity for all candidates to demonstrate their achievement of the required learning outcomes for research
- Where the appropriate Appeals Procedure applies to any learner conducting research with a disability the Provider will make particular reference to any reasonable adjustment that has been made or should be made for that individual.

Associated procedures will also be monitored in relation to protected characteristics.

15. RELEVANT STATUTORY GUIDANCE

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#) - Governs use and privacy protections for personal data. Would apply to collection and handling of research data.
- [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#) - Provides guidance on capacity to consent for vulnerable populations. Important for competency determinations in research contexts.
- [Equality Act 2010](#) - Relevant for equitable inclusion criteria and prevention of discrimination.
- [Animal testing and research: guidance for the regulated community - GOV.UK](#) -
- [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) - Sets expectations around risk assessment, precautions and mitigations that would be relevant to research activities.

16. ACCOMPANYING LUMINATE EDUCATION GROUP POLICIES

- [Luminate Data Protection Policy](#) - Ensures our commitment to compliance with all relevant laws in respect of personal data, and the protection of the 'rights and freedoms' of individuals whose information the Group collects and processes in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

17. RECOMMENDED ACCOMPANYING GUIDANCE

- [Research Integrity Office: Code of Practice](#) - Sets standards for process and conduct of research across disciplines. Also includes useful resources for researchers, such as a 'recommended checklist for researchers'
- [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research \(HRA\)](#) - Provides guidelines for practices and governance of research in health and social care contexts.
- [Luminate Education Group Data Protection Policy](#) - ensures compliance with statutory processes in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

18. REVIEW

Owner: Head of Learning Enhancement (Leeds Conservatoire), Head of HE Research and Learning Development (University Centre Leeds)

Introduced:

Last review:

Next Review: July 2028

The Provider reserves the right to review the policy at any time.

Change Summary		
Version	Date	Summary of Changes