# POLICY 063
# RESEARCH ETHICS

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## 1. PURPOSE

1.1 The ACM Research Ethics policy sets out the requirements for ethical considerations for all research activity conducted at ACM. ACM is committed to ensuring that research conducted by either ACM staff or students meets legal requirements and ethical best practice.

1.2 The ACM Research Ethics policy should be formally incorporated into the delivery of any research-based modules within all undergraduate or postgraduate programmes delivered at ACM.

## 2. POLICY SCOPE

2.1 This policy acts as a framework for ethical procedure across all programmes and campuses at ACM.

2.2 This policy covers staff and student research and all research practice including practice based/led research.

2.3 This policy outlines core principles and the approach to ethics taken at ACM as well as the responsibilities of the Ethics Committee, Researchers and Supervisors.

2.4 This policy sits within a broader framework of research and best practice at ACM.

2.5 The policy conforms with all related legislation and is consistent with ethical best practice.

2.6 Academic integrity of research and academic freedom is supported within this policy without contravening ethical best practice and legal and statutory requirements.

2.7 Ethical approval is required for all research carried out by students and staff across all ACM campuses.

2.8 Research which involves human participants will always require ethical approval. The level of risk related to this type of research will vary, however the following will be considered to be of high risk:

- Research involving vulnerable groups
- Research involving children or adults that are unable to give informed consent
- Research where participants have participated in or are discussing illegal activity

2.9 The following topics will be considered to be of risk and will require approval by the ACM Research Ethics Committee (REC):

- Research into terrorism
- Research that investigates illegal activities including drug use or attendance at illegal raves
- Research involving deception
- Research where the researcher is investigating outside of their specialism

## 3. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### 3.1 Prevention of harm

3.1.1 Both researchers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that participants are safe from physical and psychological harm during the research.

3.1.2 Where there is a risk to participants of physical or psychological harm, this is not absolved through informed consent.

3.1.3 Researchers must include a risk assessment within their ethics form which must include a plan to reasonably mitigate any physical or psychological risks within the research.

3.1.4 Researchers must not claim expertise in an area that is reasonably beyond their specialism particularly in high risk areas related to medical or psychological expertise.

3.1.5 Any safeguarding or PREVENT concerns must be reported through ACM's safeguarding channels, in line with ACM's safeguarding policies

3.2.6 Participants must be given the option to anonymise their personal data and information. This is particularly important for participants who are disclosing sensitive data that may put them at risk. Participants must be told how the information will be anonymised. At any point prior to submission a participant must be able to request for their data to be anonymised.

### 3.2 Free and informed consent

3.2.1 Participants must be given all information about the study needed to give informed consent. This must include the aims and objectives of the study and how their data will be processed in line with GDPR.

3.2.2 Information about the study should be provided in a written format for participants so that they can refer back to information during the study. Information sheets must include contact details for the student's supervisor and it must be made clear to participants that they can contact supervisors if they have concerns about the study. A template information sheet will be provided for students on Canvas.

3.2.3 Written consent to participate must be gained through consent forms. Template consent forms will be provided for students on Canvas.

3.2.4 Where a participant is unable to give informed consent (e.g. if a participant is under the age of 16 or is unable to understand the constraints of the study). All steps must be taken to provide the participant with information needed to understand the study. The participant should be included in the decision to participate in agreement with the person

with legal responsibility for them. The person with legal responsibility can give consent for them to participate in the study. The participant has the right to disagree with this decision.

3.2.5 Coercion should not be used to promote engagement with research. This includes, but is not limited to, providing incentives to participate in a study or pressuring family members, students, employees and friends to be participants.

3.2.6 Potential participants must not be disadvantaged by not taking part in a study e.g. where a study is placed within an education setting a suitable alternative should be provided for those who choose not to engage with the study.

### 3.3 Right to withdraw from a study

3.3.1 All participants must be given the right to withdraw from a study at any point prior to submission.

3.3.2 How a participant requests to withdraw must be made clear within the participant information sheet prior to starting the study.

3.3.3 Where the researcher has an existing relationship with the participant (this includes, but is not limited to, participants being a family member, friend, student or employee) then an independent third party must be used as the contact to withdraw from the study. This can be the supervisor for the research project.

3.3.4 Participants must not be put under any undue pressure for requesting to withdraw from a study, including, but not limited to, being told that their withdrawal will be detrimental to a student's final grade on a project.

3.3.5 Participants must not be disadvantaged by withdrawing from a study e.g. for studies taking place in classrooms participants who withdraw from the study must still have access to the same education experience.

### 3.4 Conflict of interest

3.4.1 To protect academic integrity, it is important that the researcher maintains their independence and that research is not impacted by conflicts of interest. This includes, but is not limited to, funders, employers, personal relationships and sponsorship.

3.4.2 ACM recognises that researchers may be sponsored to undertake research or study with ACM. Sponsors must not influence any final outcomes of research or data produced through research.

3.4.3 Any conflicts of interest (actual, potential or perceived) must be disclosed in writing to the chair of the Ethics Committee. These will be considered by the committee and a conflict of interest management plan will be put in place with the researcher to prevent damage to the reputation of the researcher or ACM.

3.4.4 Where conflicts cannot be managed the ACM reserves the right to prevent the research from being undertaken.

## 4. ACM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

4.1 The ACM Research Ethics Committee, which reports to the ACM Quality and Standards Committee, provides ethical approval and oversight for all student and staff research at ACM.

4.2 The ACM Research Ethics Committee is responsible for ensuring that research meets ethical best practice and aligns with statutory and legal commitments.

4.3 The ACM Research Ethics Committee meets twice per term to consider:

- ACM Research Ethics Forms submitted by ACM students which have been deemed at-risk by the Supervisor
- Any staff-led research conducted by ACM staff whilst in their capacity as an ACM member of staff.

4.4 The ACM Research Ethics Committee is made up of a combination of academic and professional staff from across ACM.

4.5 Research supervisors are required to present on behalf of the student for any ethical applications which are deemed at-risk.

## 5. ACM RESEARCH ETHICS PROCESS

5.1 ACM students undertaking primary research must submit an ACM Research Ethics Form.

5.2 ACM will appoint a research supervisor to all students undertaking primary research projects. Supervisors will be selected based on having appropriate research knowledge in a relevant area.

5.3 Supervisors are responsible for the initial review of all submitted ACM Research Ethics Forms and for determining the risk level of the research being proposed. The Supervisor Declaration and accompanying ACM Research Ethics Committee Tracking Document must be completed by the supervisor within one working week of receipt of submission.

5.4 Supervisors can sign off low risk applications. Applications deemed at-risk must be referred to the ACM Research Ethics Committee in a timely manner.

5.5 Where a student has failed to provide enough relevant information on their ACM Research Ethics Form they will be asked to resubmit their form.

5.6 Supervisors are responsible for communicating approval to students with low risk research projects.

5.7 The ACM Research Ethics Committee (REC) will communicate their decision and requirements directly to students (with Supervisors on copy) within one week of the ethics committee.

5.8 A student may appeal against the decision of the ACM Research Ethics Committee in line with the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

## 6. RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITY

6.1 No research can be started without ethical approval

6.2 Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the information provided on their ACM Research Ethics Form is accurate and includes all details of their methodology and research approach.

6.3 Researchers are responsible for submitting their ACM Research Ethics Form with enough time to be reviewed by the ACM Research Ethics Committee (REC) prior to starting their primary research.

6.4 If a researcher is unsure of recommendations mabe by either their supervisor or the ACM Research Ethics Committee (REC), the researcher must seek clarification in advance of starting primary research.

6.5 Researchers are responsible for ensuring that personal and sensitive data is stored in line with GDPR requirements.

6.6 Any researcher who starts primary research without ACM ethical approval will be investigated under ACM's Academic Integrity Policy.

6.7 Researchers must ensure that the research they are undertaking sits within their specialism and does not involve using research techniques or approaches outside of their reasonable research specialism, e.g. a person with a creative arts background must not undertake research into medicine.

6.8 Researchers must ensure all participants receive information about the study and are able to give full, informed consent prior to participation.

6.9 In order for participants to be able to give informed consent, researchers must provide a participant information sheet which outlines the aims, outcomes and methods

of the study. There is an ACM template which may be used for this purpose - ACM Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Template.

6.10 Researchers are responsible for declaring any and all potential conflicts of interest including partner organisations involved in research.

## 7. RESEARCH SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY

7.1 Research Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that students under their supervision understand ethical best practice and legal requirements including GDPR.

7.2 Research Supervisors are expected to keep up to date on ethical best practice and relevant legislation, supported by the ACM Research Ethics Committee.

7.3 Research Supervisors are required to support their students through the ACM Research Ethics process, this includes supporting the student to complete the ACM Research Ethics Form.

7.4 Where a student is believed to be acting unethically in research, a supervisor must report this to the ACM Research Ethics Chair.

7.5 Research Supervisors can give feedback on research ethics prior to a student submitting their ethics forms.

## 8. ACM RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY

8.1 ACM is responsible for the ethical conduct in research undertaken by students while studying at ACM and staff who have a research provision within their contract at ACM.

8.2 ACM cannot accept responsibility or liability for research started prior to a student starting a course or a researcher having received a contract from ACM.

8.3 In the case of students who have joined a course part way through study and research has been started prior to joining ACM, the student must provide the ethical approval from their previous institution and a disclaimer must be included in the student's research submission stating that some research was undertaken outside of ACM's supervision.

## 9. BIOETHICS

9.1 ACM is not a medical specialist institution and will endeavour to partner with the relevant specialist organisations where research engages with medical or psychological research practices.

9.2 ACM cannot give consent to the storage and use of human organs and tissue from

the living, and the removal, storage and use of tissue and organs from the deceased, for specified health-related purposes including medical research.

## 10. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AND RESEARCH ETHICS

10.1 Misconduct within research and research practices is defined as:

- Failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research;
- Deception in relation to research proposals;
- Unethical behaviour in the conduct of research;
- Unauthorised use of information that 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 or corruption of research data;
- Distortion of research outcomes, by distortion, manipulation or omission of data that do not fit expected results;
- Dishonest 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;
- Attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct;
- Collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others;
- Failure to comply with relevant legislation, including that relating to health and safety, data protection, intellectual property, and animal experimentation.

This list is not exhaustive and other misconduct specifically related to research activity may be dealt with under the Academic Integrity procedure.

## 11. RELATED POLICIES

- Academic Integrity
- Student Disciplinary
- Academic Appeals

## 12. POLICY OWNER

This Policy is under the responsibility of the Academic Board. The responsible committee will ensure the cyclical review of this Policy is carried out under ACM's Quality Assurance Framework.

The Academic Board delegates operational responsibility of this Policy to:

- Head of Quality and Standards;

- Research Lecturers;
- Research Supervisors;
- Registrar.

## 13. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There is no further supporting information in relation to this Policy.

## 14. DOCUMENT HISTORY AND NEXT REVIEW

Version: 2.0

Approved on: 8th September 2023

Approved by: Quality and Standards Committee for Academic Board

Date of next review: August 2025