



**Bournemouth  
University**

# **Research Ethics Code of Practice September 2009**

[www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. RESEARCH ETHICS CODES OF PRACTICE OVERVIEW**

1.1 The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) oversees the development of research ethics policies and procedures at Bournemouth University (BU). This document is designed to provide guidance about conducting ethical research and to provide details of the University process for ensuring appropriate consideration, approval and documentation by staff and students. This revised version of the UREC Research Ethics Codes of Practice (RECP) is effective as of September 2009 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

1.2 **The guidance and processes apply to all staff and student researchers** within the University (referred to as 'researchers' in this document) and aims to provide clear guidance to protect the interests of all human and animal subjects involved in research.

1.3 The RECP should be considered as part of the research process; applicable at all levels of activity and output including undergraduate, postgraduate, postdoctoral and staff research throughout the University.

1.4 Researchers should consider appropriate relevant external agency guidance in addition to the RECP; these can be found on the BU webpage [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics). It is the responsibility of all researchers to follow the RECP in addition to academic or professional guidance in the conduct of a study.

1.5 Research involving any aspect of the National Health Service (NHS); including sites, patients, carers, staff or records must be approved by the National Research Ethics Service (NRES).

1.6 Conducting research without appropriate ethical approval will constitute a disciplinary offence. For students this can range from failure of a module to dismissal from the university. For staff this can range from disciplinary action to dismissal from the university and debarring from professional bodies.

1.7 School Research Ethics approval procedures can be viewed at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

2.1 'Research' refers to any form of disciplined inquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or involves a disciplined inquiry at any level which is designed to demonstrate mastery of research skills and techniques.

2.2 'Research ethics' refers to the moral principles guiding research including inception, aims, completion, publication of results and beyond.

2.3 Types of research or activities requiring ethical approval include those listed below:-

- Basic Research: experimental or theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge with no specific output in mind (i.e. pilot studies).
- Scholarship: work intended to expand the boundaries of knowledge and across disciplines through the analysis, synthesis and interpretation of

ideas and information; founded on a rigorous and documented methodology.

- Strategic Research: work intended to generate new knowledge which might provide for future application.
- Applied Research: work undertaken to develop or test existing knowledge and which is primarily directed towards either specific practical objectives or towards the evaluation of policies or practices.
- Consultancy & Enterprise: the development of existing knowledge and the application of analytical and investigative skills to the resolution of problems presented by a client; usually in an industrial, commercial or professional context.
- Professional practice and practice-based development: the theorisation and effectiveness of professional practice advanced by academic staff who practice and participate in it.

2.4 Research includes work conducted under those listed above but also undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, project work, research degree related activity, consultancy and enterprise.

### **3. KEY PRINCIPLES**

3.1 The following key principles need to be addressed by those undertaking research:

- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken in ways which ensure integrity and quality.
- Participants and research teams must be as fully informed as possible about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks are involved. Exceptions to this principle may be permitted in the case of covert research; however approval for this must be gained from UREC.
- The confidentiality and anonymity of the information supplied by participants must be respected.
- Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion / gratuities.
- Harm to research participants must be avoided.
- The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.
- Ethical approval must be obtained before research is commenced. This should take no longer than one month. Guidance on the process may be obtained from the UREC Secretary; contact details are available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)

### **4. RESPECT FOR AUTONOMY, BENEFICENCE & NON-MALEFICENCE**

4.1 Researchers should respect the human participants in their investigations as persons of worth whose participation is a matter of their autonomous choice. The process of securing informed consent upholds the principle of respecting autonomy (see Section 10). Special consideration needs to be given in circumstances where a participant is unable to appreciate the implications of participating in research; see Section 12 for further information.

4.2 If persons have diminished autonomy, whether because of immaturity, incapacitation or circumstances that severely restricts their autonomy, they require special concern in relation to consent (see Section 12).

4.3 Research should be undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice which include the concept of 'beneficence' (do positive good) and 'non-maleficence' (do no harm).

4.4 Research should be scientifically sound and its purpose to contribute to knowledge or develop researcher skills. It should be undertaken or supervised by those with appropriate qualifications and experience.

4.5 The value of the research should be proportional to the inherent risk to the participants (including emotional and mental distress and damage to financial and social standing). Concern for the interests of the individual participants must always prevail over the interests of science and society. The research should be preceded by careful assessment of predictable risks in comparison with foreseeable benefits to the participants or to others.

4.6 Adequate facilities and procedures should be in place to deal with any potential hazards.

## **RESEARCHER ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **5. RESPONSIBILITIES**

5.1 Researchers must read the RECP prior to commencement of research. If further guidance is needed, School Research Ethics Representatives should be consulted; the list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

5.2 Responsibility for implementing the key principles of ethically guided research lies with both researchers and BU. Researchers are responsible for conducting research in line with RECP and other relevant guidance. In the case of BU students, supervisors must be aware of and address potential ethical issues contained within a research project. BU is responsible for ensuring research is subject to appropriate ethical review, approval and monitoring.

5.3 Failure to conduct research in accordance with the RECP may result in the loss of funding support, withdrawal or failure of degree awards, personal disciplinary or legal action taken against the researcher, supervisors or the University.

### **6. RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITY**

6.1 The first responsibility for ethical conduct rests with the researcher who must:

- Assess and consider ethical implications of projects (including the funding source; see Section 8) and conduct research in accordance with ethical principles.
- Seek expert advice where appropriate and consult relevant documents from professional bodies (a list can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

- Be aware of, and operate in accordance with, the University's policies and procedures and professional requirements.
- Develop and maintain awareness of relevant discipline and professional ethical issues. Researchers are responsible for ensuring any legal requirements of supporting bodies or funders are met.
- Seek re-approval by the School Research Ethics Committee if the research protocol or other aspects of the research changes.

6.2 The completion of various BU ethics review forms should normally demonstrate an appropriate level of consideration has taken place. However consideration of ethics must take place throughout the entire research project. If unsure or in doubt as to what is appropriate consult the UREC Secretary for advice; contact details are available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

## **7. RESEARCHER INTEGRITY**

7.1 All researchers should read the University's Code of Practice on Misconduct in Academic Research (available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

7.2 During the planning, approval and implementation of any research project careful attention should be given to ensure researchers (and supervisors in the case of students) have sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the project and to address any potential problems.

7.3 Researchers are responsible for adhering to University policies and procedures and considering ethical issues within their research. Senior researchers leading a project (or supervisors in the case of students) may be held accountable for the actions of more junior staff (or students) if they fail to carry out their research in accordance with best practice.

7.4 Researchers are responsible for disseminating research findings in a truthful and accurate way. Limitations of the research and the extent to which they can be generalised should also be stated when disseminating findings.

7.5 Researchers also have a degree of responsibility for the use made of their research and therefore should not ignore its misuse.

## **8. NON-PERMITTED SOURCES OF FUNDING**

8.1 Researchers should be mindful of point 2.2 of this Code of Practice and ensure the moral principles guiding the research – including the aims and publication of results – are sound; in particular with regards to commissioned research.

8.2 Funding should not be accepted for research where researchers do not have freedom to conduct work in an independent fashion in accordance with normal scientific and research conventions, including the publication of results. Researchers must consider carefully whether to accept research funding from any source where doing so may result in reputational damage to themselves or the university.

8.3 Bournemouth University's expertise, facilities and resources should not be made available for processes that would be damaging to the public interest or common good (e.g. public health, common good, reputation of BU, researcher reputation).

8.4 BU would not wish to engage in activities that compromise the independence or integrity of their work or which provided support to an industry whose products cause serious damage to health. It is therefore Bournemouth University's policy to avoid direct or indirect links with the tobacco industry in research.

8.5 These links include funds from a company/ group engaged in the manufacture of tobacco goods, funds in the name of a tobacco brand (irrespective of the brand name being used solely for tobacco goods), funds from a body established by the tobacco industry or companies engaged in the manufacture of tobacco goods.

## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

### **9. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

9.1 Researchers must consider the physiological, psychological, social, political and economic impact of their research on participants. Efforts must be made to protect participants against physical, mental, emotional or social injury in order to ensure, as far as possible, that no harm comes to them as a result of being involved in the study.

9.2 BU staff and students may volunteer to partake in research and in this case particular consideration should be given to the motives that might prompt them to volunteer. BU students may consent to participate in research as a normal part of their programme, however the decision to take part / withdraw must not be influenced by coercion or inappropriate financial inducement (which excludes payment for time/ travel expenses).

9.3 In general, the recommended approach to recruitment is to seek volunteer participants through a public notice, explaining the purpose of the research and information as to what volunteers can expect. An example of this can be found on the BU research ethics webpage [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics) .

### **10. INFORMED CONSENT**

10.1 Informed and voluntary consent is part of the principle of respect for autonomy emphasised in the European Convention on Human Rights and advocated by numerous funders (i.e. Department of Health) and professional bodies (i.e. British Sociological Association, British Psychological Society).

10.2 Researchers should conduct covert research only in exceptional circumstances and with the full approval of the School Research Ethics Committee or UREC; contact details can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics) .

10.3 Participants should be given an information sheet which outlines in layman's terms the purpose of the research, potential hazards, any discomfort participation may entail, emphasise the right to withdraw from the study, state

their rights under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts, provide researcher contact details and outline the complaints procedure. Participants should also sign a consent form. This does not apply to survey research however which by its return is accepted as an expression of consent to participate. Covert studies are exempt from providing information sheets and consent forms for participants; however as outlined earlier, such studies must obtain the consent of the School Research Ethics Committee or UREC. In research studies where an information sheet and signed consent form are deemed inappropriate, comparable procedures should be in place to communicate the necessary information and record consent.

10.4 If the nature of the research is such that fully informing participants before the study would invalidate results, whatever explanation is possible should be given to the participants. There must be provision for appropriate explanation and debriefing to the participants on completion of the study.

10.5 Researchers must consult their School Research Ethics Representative whenever research is likely to involve psychological or physiological stress or encroachment on privacy. It will be necessary for the researcher to consult any legal or professional guidelines to ensure research which may involve stress or encroachment on privacy is permitted.

10.6 Individual consent may not be necessary for non-intrusive research activities; for example studies involving observation of public behaviour. However researchers must consider and respect the privacy of individuals and groups involved and ensure that the research does not run counter to the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8 (this document can be viewed at the Office of Public Sector Information webpage [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga\\_19980042\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980042_en_1)).

10.7 Implicit consent may be given through the completion and return of surveys or questionnaires, removing the need for a written agreement.

10.8 Records of consent should be retained. School Research Ethics Representatives can provide advice on storage procedures for each school; a list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

10.9 Any inducement offered to participants should be declared when seeking ethical approval and should be in accordance with appropriate guidelines.

## **11. THIRD PARTY CONSENT**

11.1 When third parties (e.g. spouse, teacher, carer) are directly involved in the care, education or treatment of participants, or if the research will interfere with the services provided by them, consent should also be obtained from them.

11.2 Participant affiliation to particular organisations or special groups (e.g. educational institutions, business organisations, hospitals) may necessitate the granting of permission to conduct the research. This should be obtained and any relevant policies or guidelines followed. If a medical condition could be aggravated by participation in the research, G.P. / Consultant consent should be obtained.

## **12. VULNERABLE PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

12.1 Where participants have diminished autonomy, because of immaturity, incapacitation or circumstances that severely restricts their autonomy, or are considered vulnerable or if capacity to give consent is in doubt, specialist advice from the School Research Ethics Representative should be obtained. A list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

12.2 Researchers should explain as fully as possible and in meaningful terms to the participants the purpose of the research. The participant's right to refuse participation or to withdraw at any stage of the project must be explained. Where it is not possible to obtain informed consent in an NHS context (i.e. unconscious patients), specialist advice and approval will be required from the School Postgraduate Committee and NRES.

12.3 If the participant is unable to appreciate the implications of participation, informed consent must be obtained from parents / legal guardian/ Power of Attorney.

12.4 If participants are approached as patients or their information will be extracted from medical records guidelines issued by the Medical Research Council should be followed which is available at [www.mrc.ac.uk/Ourresearch/Ethicsresearchguidance](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Ourresearch/Ethicsresearchguidance)

12.5 If children are involved in a research study, they should be included in key aspects of the process of consent (i.e. have information on the study explained in terms they are able to understand). The child's parent /legal guardian must be informed and give their consent to participate in the study. Criminal Records Bureau clearance may also be required; School Research Ethics Representatives can provide advice on this (a list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

## **ETHICAL REVIEW**

### **13. REVIEW PROCESS OF ETHICAL POLICY & CONDUCT**

13.1 The BU ethics reporting structure is as follows:



13.2 UREC submits regular reports and minutes of meetings to Senate however UREC retains absolute independence in the consideration of the ethical status of research. Independent lay members are part of the committee; current membership of the committee can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

13.3 UREC is responsible for guiding ethics policies and processes and reviews applications which cannot be adequately dealt with, or recommended to it by School Research Ethics Committees.

13.4 Each School has a Research Ethics Review Committee who assess research projects. The approval processes for each school can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

13.5 Each School is responsible for appointing a Research Ethics Representative to be a member of UREC and who may be approached for general guidance about ethical review within the School; the list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

#### **14. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ETHICAL REVIEW**

14.1 Ethical review is the responsibility of each School. However UREC has overall responsibility for ethical review and may intervene at any stage.

14.2 To evaluate ethical implications in research, review of the Initial Research Ethics Checklist, and where appropriate the Research Ethics Review Application, will be undertaken.

14.3 Additional peer review is strongly recommended where it is likely that significant ethical concerns will arise.

14.4 Responsibility for ethical review in taught programmes is the responsibility of the programme executive or committee. Undergraduate students should avoid studies with significant ethical concerns.

14.5 Responsibility for ethical review in research degrees is the responsibility of the School Research Ethics Committee.

14.6 Responsibility for ethical review in other types of project is the responsibility of the Deputy Dean (Research & Enterprise) or the School Research Ethics Representative. All projects involving human or animal subjects and requiring external funding body approval must be submitted to the School Research Committee for review.

14.7 Each School is responsible for conducting ethical review and may only pass responsibility for the approval to UREC in the case of significant outstanding unresolved issues. Researchers have the right to appeal against decisions made at School level by presenting a case to UREC. Researchers have the right to appeal against decisions made by UREC level by following the general BU appeals regulations. Written minutes recording key arguments and decisions must be kept from ethical review meetings.

14.8 In the event of a project needing urgent approval for a funding body, it will be possible for the application to be submitted whilst awaiting BU ethical

review, provided this approach is acceptable to the funding body concerned. Research must not commence until ethical approval from BU has been granted.

14.9 Ethical consideration must be continued throughout the entire research project. Researchers and supervisors should attempt to forecast likely ethical challenges and state how these will be addressed in the research design. If during the course of the research unanticipated ethical problems arise, it will be necessary to record details of the problem and the solution arrived at in writing. School Research Ethics Representatives are also available to discuss issues arising during research further; the list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

14.10 Significant problems experienced with participants should be recorded and reported to the staff responsible for approving the project. Circumstances likely to have a significant legal, moral or public relations impact on the University should be referred to UREC.

## **15. PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE**

15.1 Initial Research Ethics Checklist: in the case of research involving human participants/ tissue, animal/tissue or research with problematic consequences the senior researcher directly involved with the research should undertake the review process with the awareness of others involved. Researchers are to complete the Initial Research Ethics Checklist to determine whether a further review is necessary and this should be submitted to the School Research Ethics Representative in the case of staff or supervisors in the case of students (a list of School Ethics Representatives can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)). If it is determined from this review that no further action is necessary a copy of the relevant documentation should be kept within the department and the research may begin. The process for researchers within HSC differs; see point 15.3 for guidance.

15.2 School Research Ethics Review Application Forms: if it is determined from a review of the Checklist that further consideration is necessary, the appropriate research ethics review application form must be completed and submitted to the School Research Ethics Committee for approval (procedures for submitting this can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)). The process for researchers within HSC differs; see point 15.3 for guidance.

15.3 All research undertaken in the School of Health and Social Care (HSC) which is not subject to review by an external body must go through the HSC Research Governance Approval Process (RG2). Therefore the Initial Research Ethics Checklist form does not need to be completed for research undertaken in this School. The proposal and associated documentation forms should be submitted to the HSC School Research Ethics Representative (see [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)) in the case of staff, or supervisors in the case of students. If it is determined that no further action is necessary, a copy of the relevant documentation should be kept within the department and the research may begin.

15.4 Research involving NHS patients or staff must be approved by NRES; see the NRES website for further information ([www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk)). BU has a Medical Ethics Sub-Committee which requires notification of intention to use

the NRES system; contact the School Ethics Representative for further direction.

15.5 Research on animals/tissue requires a licence under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Experimentation / anatomical examination in human morbid anatomy require a license under the 1984 Anatomy Act. If appropriate, discuss further with a School Research Ethics Representative; the list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

## **16. EXTERNALLY APPROVED PROJECTS & INSURANCE**

16.1 Research to be conducted off-campus with evidence of ethical approval granted by an external ethics committee requires appropriate review by BU to ensure appropriate approvals are in place. Researchers should contact the Schools Ethics Representative with evidence of approval and the terms on which the approval was granted; the list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

16.2 Research transferred into BU from another institution requires appropriate review by BU to ensure appropriate approvals are in place. Researchers should contact the UREC Secretary with evidence of approval and the terms on which the approval was granted; contact details are available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

16.3 It is the responsibility of the researcher leading the research (supervisor in the case of students) to ensure there is appropriate insurance cover for the study and that health and safety and data protection issues have been addressed. Copies of all relevant documentation should be kept on file. Details of insurance can be obtained from a School Research Ethics Representative.

## **LEGISLATION**

### **17. HUMAN TISSUE ACT**

17.1 This document does not attempt to describe the legislation in detail and therefore where research involves human tissue, researchers should consult guidance on the Human Tissue Act 2004 (HTA) from the Human Tissue Authority webpage <http://www.hta.gov.uk/>.

17.2 The HTA sets the legal framework for the storage, use (and for deceased patients, removal) of human tissue. Human tissue includes any material from a human body including human cells, live gametes and embryos created outside the human body (although not hair and nails from living humans). Stem cells and cell lines used for human application are also subject to legislative control, either by the provisions of the HTA or the EU Tissues and Cells Directive.

17.3 Researchers using tissue removed from deceased individuals, or storing material removed from living or deceased individuals must consult the guidance given on the HTA webpages and may be required to obtain a licence from the Human Tissue Authority. School Research Ethics Representatives can provide advice on this; a list of Representatives is available at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

17.4 Researchers should note that it is unlawful to carry out the following activities without a licence from the HTA:

- Hospital and coroner's post-mortem examinations
- Removal, use and storage of material organs or tissue after death (except for transplantation)
- Anatomical examinations
- Storage of human bodies, body parts or human tissue (including storage for generic future research, both identifiable and anonymised)
- Public display of human tissue

17.5 There are exceptions to the requirement of obtaining a licence, which includes the storage of organs up to 48 hours for transplantation or research projects with the approval of a research ethics authority recognised by the United Kingdom Ethics Committee Authority (UKECA), such as NRES. School Research Ethics Representatives can provide advice on this.

17.6 Wherever possible informed consent should be gained in correspondence with Sections 12 to 14 of the HTA. The HTA also requires consent to be obtained for any storage and use of tissue removed after death for research purposes; consent may be obtained from the donor before death or from the donor's relatives after death. Consent is usually required for the storage and use of tissue from living individuals, unless the material has been anonymised (i.e. the researcher does not know the identity of the donor). Consent may not be needed if ethical approval has been given by a research ethics authority recognised by the UKECA.

17.7 Archaeological research using tissue taken from a person who died before 1<sup>st</sup> September 1906 and research on material held prior to the commencement of the Act (1<sup>st</sup> September 2006) or imported material does not require consent.

17.8 In addition to the guidance given on the HTA website, guidance given by the Medical Research Council (MRC) should be consulted. This can be accessed at the MRC website

[http://www.ukcrc-rgadvice.org/Documents/MRC\\_Human\\_Tissue\\_Summary\\_Consent.pdf](http://www.ukcrc-rgadvice.org/Documents/MRC_Human_Tissue_Summary_Consent.pdf)

## **18. DATA PROTECTION ACT**

18.1 The collection and storage of research data by researchers must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) of 1998. This document does not attempt to describe the legislation in detail and therefore researchers should consult guidance on the DPA from the Office of Public Sector Information webpage [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga\\_19980029\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1).

18.2 The decisive factor in determining the significance of personal data is whether the information may affect a participant's privacy in their personal life or in a professional capacity. Names and personal addresses will usually be covered by the DPA, but not information such as whether a person attended a meeting.

18.3 Researchers should follow the University's Data Protection Policy and Guidelines which can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics). Exemptions to this Act and information about the storage of data and retention of documents can be found in Section 21.

18.4 Researchers should be aware of the risks to anonymity, privacy and confidentiality posed by personal information storage and processing; including computer and paper files, e-mail records, audio and videotapes or any other information which directly identifies an individual.

18.5 Participants must be informed as to the personal information being collected, how this will be used and to whom it will be disclosed (including details of any intent to publish). Participants should be advised as to the format and location of the stored material and have a contact address to which queries can be made.

18.6 When personal identifiers are used in a study, researchers should explain in an application to the School Research Ethics Committee why this is necessary and how confidentiality will be protected.

18.7 Procedures for protecting the confidentiality of participants should be followed during the course of the project. These include:

- Coding data with numbers/ pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants;
- Storing data in a locked file with limited access;
- Where appropriate, using pseudonyms for participants, agencies and geographical settings in the publishing of reports;
- Shredding information which could reveal the identity of participants or places.

The choice and rationale for coding data should be evident for auditing purposes.

18.8 Provisions for data security at the end of a project exist in each school; Research Ethics Representatives should be consulted on this (a full list of representatives can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics)).

18.9 Participants have the right to withdraw their permission for personal data to be used by researchers at any time; although in practice this may not be achievable if the final results have been published.

## **19. DATA PROTECTION ACT EXEMPTIONS**

19.1 Data processed for research purposes only receives specific exemptions from provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA), provided the data are not processed to support decisions relating to particular individuals and participants are not caused substantial harm or distress by processing the data.

19.2 The DPA allows personal data to be processed only with knowledge and/or permission of participants (covered by participant consent). However, the DPA allows researchers to process personal data for purposes other than that for which they were originally obtained provided that the data is anonymised in any published document and the further processing is not considered incompatible with the purposes for which the information was originally obtained.

19.3 In cases where research leads to establishing an archive (such as in longitudinal studies), researchers are able to hold personal data indefinitely provided it is used for research purposes (but note BU guidance on the storage of data in Section 21).

19.4 Participants have right of access to their personal data. However, the DPA states personal data are exempt from access rights where the data are processed for research purposes and any published results are anonymised.

## **20. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

20.1 This document does not attempt to describe the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FIA) in detail and therefore researchers should consult guidance on the FIA from the Office of Public Sector Information webpage [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000036\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000036_en_1).

20.2 The FIA gives members of the public a general right of access to documents produced by a public authority. Unless there are grounds to apply a limited number of exemptions it is likely that the public would have access to the final, published versions of research projects. BU allows for research dissertations to be kept confidential where there is an understanding that publication of material could breach personal or commercial confidentiality thus complying with Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000. Enquiries about the implementation of this legislation should be sent to the UREC Secretary; contact details can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics).

## **21. RESEARCH DATA STORAGE**

21.1 Data is defined as both hard and electronic copies of:

- Questionnaires
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Transcriptions
- Ciphers (coding)
- Personal contact data
- Images
- Databases
- External ethical submission
- BU documentation of study information
- Consent forms
- Participant information sheets.

21.2 Researchers are responsible for ensuring files are rationalised both during and upon completion of a project.

21.3 At the end of a research project, each School is responsible for providing researchers with details of:

- Rationalised documentation and electronic information which must be retained on completion of any research project
- Procedures for wiping computer hard drives of individuals holding information relating to the completed project
- The safe storage area which can be accessible if required to temporarily store this information for as long as necessary
- The archival process for IT software in order that any raw data may be accessed at any future date

- The system to destroy tapes, discs and other electronic storage units and the confidential destruction of hard copy documentation
- The process for the rationalisation of files for ongoing projects
- A School contact who can advise on the storage and destruction of data when required.

21.4 During the course of a research project, all hard copy data must be kept in a locked filing cabinet within the School. All electronic data must be stored on a password-protected PC. In accordance with BU's Insurance Policy, it is recommended that hard data is also stored in a secure locked safe.

21.5 Researchers and those with access to stored documents must be aware of the arrangements for the secure storage of data. A risk assessment of collected data should be made prior to the commencement of research; including appropriate access rights and arrangements for the back-up of electronic data. Where market research companies or other data collection agencies are gathering data, BU may not be directly involved in the storage of data. However it is the responsibility of BU staff to ensure clear agreements are in place governing the storage of data and compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (see Section 18).

21.6 Data retention time can be determined on an individual project basis; taking into consideration any external legal or regulatory framework for particular types of research and in view of terms and conditions imposed by external research organisations or collaborators. If a study is to be extended, participants should be advised of the change wherever possible and practicable. The following retention timescales are intended as guidelines and are to be considered the maximum retention times.

- Numerical/Statistical Data: stored in raw format for up to 5 years from completion of the project. Data should be held securely and backed up on a regular basis. Unless data is to be used in further study (e.g. longitudinal studies) then it should be destroyed after this time. If the data is used to inform public policy making it should be archived. Researchers contracted by National Statistics should consult the National Statistics Code of practice at [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national\\_statistics/cop/protocols\\_published.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national_statistics/cop/protocols_published.asp)
- Questionnaire Responses/Interview Transcriptions and notes: length of time may vary according to need but most respondents should expect their data to be kept no longer than 5 years without specific justification; participants should be advised of the length of time their personal data will be retained. If the data is used to inform public policy making it should be archived
- Images/Audio/Video Recordings: Original and copies of recordings should be kept for up to five years. If the data is used to inform public policy making it should be archived
- Blood/ Tissue Samples: blood and plasma samples should be anonymised whilst analysis is conducted. At the end of a project samples should either be deposited into a HTA Licensed Bank housing tissue for unspecified research, be subject to an application to the NHS REC to use samples as part of a new project or be destroyed (the latter should be used as a last resort). Researchers should be aware of the requirements of the Human Tissue Act and the need for licensed storage (see Section 17).

- Longitudinal studies: data may be kept for the duration of the study and for up to 5 years after the study has ended.

21.7 In accordance with BU's Insurance Policy at the end of a research project non-electronic copies of data should be stored in a secure locked safe; unless otherwise stated in the funder's terms of contract. Hard copies of data which need to be saved electronically must have originals stored in a secure locked safe or destroyed. The electronic version must be stored in a password-protected folder and a hard copy created (e.g. on a CD) which will be stored in a safe.

21.8 For more information on the data storage process in your school, contact the School Research Ethics Representatives; a full list of representatives can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/researchethics) .