

Research Safeguarding Framework

1. Introduction and Overview

The protection of members of the University community from harm and abuse is a key priority for Edinburgh Napier University. The University recognises its duty of care and is committed to providing a safe and protected environment for all its staff and research postgraduate students (RPG) when conducting all research and innovation activities. The University also acknowledges that within its diverse population and those involved in research as partners or participants there may be people who are vulnerable at any given time.

This framework details the processes and policies related to research safeguarding for staff and RPG students when conducting research. There is a separate [Safeguarding Policy and Support Framework](#) which applies to taught students and RPG student welfare

Research safeguarding as defined as the responsibility to anticipate, mitigate and address harm, whatever the focus of their research. The definition of research we use in this framework covers all research and innovation activities in which there are human participants this can include funded and unfunded research, contract research and commercial activities.

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) define safeguarding in the research context as preventing and addressing “any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment of research participants, communities and research staff, plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse... such as bullying, psychological abuse and physical violence.”

When undertaking research and innovation activities outside the UK, you must be aware of and address the possible impact of contextual, societal and cultural differences on the ethical conduct of those activities.

Researchers and innovators should also adhere to the principles of equitable partnerships to address inherent power imbalances when working with partners in resource-poor settings.

Information related to Research safeguarding at the University will be added to the [Safeguarding Research](#) Intranet page. Sector information on safeguarding in ODA research can be found in Appendix 1.

This guidance document outlines the policy and support framework through which the commitment of the University in its obligation to protect children and adults who are at risk of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or discrimination is set out. This guide uses the term ‘safeguarding’ in its widest possible sense throughout.

All members of the University community have an essential role to play in ensuring that people are protected, and the University is committed to working within the principles of

dignity, safety, equality and diversity. Many research funders require Universities to provide safeguarding guidance for researchers which should be followed to ensure the integrity of the research.

2.Responsibilities for Safeguarding in R&I Fieldwork

Risk management for research projects (and ensuing mitigation steps and costs) are the responsibility of the School Dean or Head of Research. However, many day-to-day responsibilities are delegated to the Supervisor or Line Manager.

It is primarily the job of the Supervisor or Line Manager to ensure that a comprehensive [risk assessment](#) is in place and to understand the level of experience of the individual undertaking fieldwork, and what support is required. However, in some cases the line manager or supervisor may not themselves have the right experience or knowledge to support this and therefore must be aware of their own limitations and seek advice from RIE, HR or research integrity committees. Line managers are required to support their student or staff member to identify and access support or training from other sources, while continuing to be approachable, respectful, and supportive as the risk assessment and planning process evolve.

In the case of RPG fieldwork, RPGs should be partners in the risk assessment process, and this should be framed as a core part of developing as a professional researcher. As with any aspect of the PhD process and supervision, it is a learning experience. The balance of roles and responsibilities is expected to be different for each student-supervisor relationship and to evolve over time.

Support at the Institutional level will be through the appropriate Professional Service as detailed in this framework.

3.Protecting Vulnerable people

[Scots law](#) also recognises that despite having full legal capacity at 16, young people under 18 can be vulnerable in certain situations.

In Scots law vulnerable adults can be defined as persons over the age of 16 who have a learning or physical disability; a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

All three elements of the definition must be met, and the presence of a particular condition does not automatically mean an adult is an 'adult at risk' or a 'vulnerable adult'.

A person may have a disability, physical and/or mental health problem and be able to safeguard their well-being and interests. It is the whole of an adult's particular circumstances which can combine to make them more vulnerable to harm than others.

When research is conducted elsewhere you should be aware of the local definitions of vulnerable people as they may differ from Scots law.

It is recognised that members of the University community will meet other people when conducting research and innovation activities wherever this may occur including field trips; outreach activities; events taking place on University property.

The policies, procedures and support arrangements which protect and safeguard the University community, children and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse are outlined below.

These measures are contained within the University's [Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy](#). Further details in section [11].

4.Raising and Reporting of Safeguarding Concerns

If a researcher or research participant has any concerns that there may be a potential safeguarding issue relating to the conduct of Research and Innovation activities, but they are unsure if this should be raised as a University compliant through the reporting mechanisms identified in section (Expectations of Conduct), they can contact ResearchIntegrity@napier.ac.uk or [Head of Research Governance](#) confidentially to discuss the next steps. If appropriate these contacts will direct you to the formal reporting routes whether these be research misconduct or academic misconduct or signpost you to other advice and support.

Where there are issues, suspicions and allegations involving harm to children or protected adults this should be referred to the appropriate designated lead officer, (Staff- Director of People and Services; Students- Head of Student Recruitment & Admissions) who will assess the information and determine what action, if any, must be taken. They will ensure suitable steps are taken as a result of any investigations, which may include contacting the police and/or fulfilling the legal duty to refer information to the PVG Scheme and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), if appropriate, as required.

The University will review any reports of safeguarding concerns and apply lessons learned around safeguarding incidents and update any guidance accordingly.

If a member of staff or a research student has had any proven safeguarding violations in the past this must be disclosed at the time of appointment (staff)/registration (student). We will seek to verify via the recruitment/pre-employment checking service if an applicant has any disciplinary proceedings underway or warnings issued/held on record, relating to misconduct/research misconduct and release will be subject to the applicant's own company policies

5.Expectations of Conduct, Raising Concerns and Sanctions for Misconduct

Expectations of standards of conduct for staff in line with the University's values and behaviours are contained in the [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#). The policy defines misconduct and defines the process and outcomes.

The University's [Student Conduct Regulations](#) provides an indicative list (not exhaustive) of examples of misconduct and gross misconduct and outlines the process to be followed and potential outcomes.

Research should be conducted to the highest levels of integrity. Researchers should also adhere to the highest level of research ethics, in line with requirements set out by national and international regulatory bodies including the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019). The [University Code of Practice on Research Integrity](#) details the conduct of researchers and covers topics such as research involving vulnerable groups, legal requirements and research misconduct.

Measures to secure a positive, supportive and inclusive working environment free from harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation for staff are set out in the [Dignity at Work Policy](#).

Concerns regarding the conduct of any member of the University community can be raised formally through the University's [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) following which action may be taken as appropriate under the Student Conduct Regulations, the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

Employees can raise concerns about relationships with their colleagues or behaviour of others towards them through the [Grievance Policy and Procedure](#) following which action may be taken as appropriate under the Student Conduct Regulations or the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

6.Research misconduct reporting and process

When an allegation of misconduct has been reported Information relating to the identity of the individual or individuals about whom a complaint is made and matters arising from this shall only be divulged to others to the extent that is necessary to conduct a proper investigation. Any individual who takes part in the assessment or the investigation shall keep confidential the matters that have been discussed. Any individual who is interviewed in the course of the investigation may be accompanied by a friend or representative if they so choose. In all cases the public presumption of innocence is maintained until the investigation process is complete.

Allegations of research misconduct is separated into two stages;

- an initial assessment (informal enquiries) to determine whether the claim has substance for an investigation

- secondly, a formal investigation to examine and evaluate all the relevant facts and determine whether research misconduct has been committed.

Upon receipt of an allegation of research misconduct, the named person should formally acknowledge receipt of the allegation by letter to the complainant (and his/her representative by agreement, in which he/she should advise him/her of the procedure that will be followed.

Initially a pre-screening process (to be completed within 10 working days) should take place to secure all relevant records, material and locations associated with the research in question to establish if the claim has substance.

The initial assessment of the allegation of research misconduct should take place within 40 days (including the pre-screening). Where evidence from the preliminary investigation indicates that unacceptable conduct may have occurred, procedures should then provide for a more detailed formal investigation through the HR or student misconduct disciplinary procedure.

Full details are in the [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

7.Risk Management of Research and Innovation activities

The assessment of risk in a specific project is assessed in the development stage via the following checks:

1. Pre-award checklist as part of internal approval process prior to application submission to external funder. This is completed by the PI to highlight any potential issues to be considered if the application is awarded or to inform the project risk assessment completed by the pre-award support in RIE. This includes involvement of humans, clinical studies, distress, vulnerable people, developing countries, researcher risks and ethical clearance. Full details in appendix 2.
2. University risk assessment and due diligence by RIE staff. There will be checks to ensure that the work meets the [University risk appetite](#) and policy for all projects (this includes corruption and stability indices for the country) and for international research projects the UKRI/ARMA questionnaire will be used for due diligence. As part of the questionnaire, we will provide the partner a list of [our research related policies](#) and details of our expectations related to management of the project finances and contractual terms.
3. The following principles should be considered by the project lead when developing a safeguarding approach for a project:
 - Identify and address the risks associated with power imbalances between individuals, especially when related to issues of consent. Remember that

variations in size, scope and content of research projects means that each project can raise its own issues when it comes to safeguarding, and the implications of power dynamics within a project should be continually considered and reassessed. When accessing a community through an authority figure or gatekeeper, consider who might be accepted as a representative of the community and how this might affect the research.

- Pay attention to gender, class, race, sexuality, age, disability, faith, and other dynamics of vulnerability to harm. Be aware of potential risks for all members of the research team, for example the different levels of threat faced by female and male individuals in particular settings – the Social Research Association (SRA) has prepared a [Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers](#), which indicates how best to prepare and conduct a research project.
- Ensure that the approach is based on victims and survivors, with a commitment to rights and needs. It is good practice to continually review safeguarding mechanisms and approaches throughout the lifetime of a project, particularly following a breach of safeguarding, to identify issues and ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- Actively consider how cultural sensitivity can be maintained, including how best to handle overseas contexts. Take time to fully consider the context in which the work is being conducted prior to applying for ethical approval. This relates also to the need for compliance with relevant in-country legal requirements – this is likely to refer specifically to DBS checks or local equivalents.
- Take steps to ensure the work is being conducted in a true partnership – this means committing time and resources to establish, nurture and sustain fair, trustworthy and equitable research partnerships. To ensure an environment of robust safeguarding, all involved must feel secure in raising issues.
- Abiding by the highest relevant set of standards – in practice, no health and safety tourism. Research that would not be ethical or compliant in the UK is also not ethical or compliant abroad

8. Protection of Health & Safety

The University is committed to ensuring the health and safety of staff, students, visitors and contractors by taking all reasonable steps to provide and maintain a safe work and study environment. Details of the University's Health & Safety management system including arrangements for accident reporting, fire and emergency procedures, first aid, travel overseas policy and student induction/staff training can be accessed on the [Health & Safety intranet site](#).

The University working/travelling overseas guidance is available on the [intranet](#). This will detail the most up to date information and processes.

9.Training

There is a wide range of training available in support of the University's aims to provide a supportive and safe environment.

A range of training is offered by service areas to their staff fulfilling key roles in relation to student safeguarding and related aspects of duty of care. Some of this is co-ordinated by Human Resources, but other areas of the University are also key to delivering related training opportunities. This includes cultural awareness; mental health first aid training; mental health awareness training for managers and staff; training in receiving a disclosure of sexual violence; prevent duty training; and a wider range of essential Health and Safety training. Training courses and events will be advertised and bookable in [HR connect](#). It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that they have attended the appropriate training and are aware of the up-to-date information, processes and rules related to the activities they are involved in. Equality and Diversity training is available in [EssentialSkillz](#). Essential training reminders will be sent directly to your email address.

In relation to the University's Protection of Vulnerable Group's Policy role holders appointed to regulated roles are offered online safeguarding and child protection training, which must be regularly updated. This is arranged by the Human Resources team at the time of appointment.

Staff in these roles are also provided with the University complaints procedure and details of the University's designated safeguarding leads (as noted above) and advised that they should report any safeguarding concerns to them. They are also provided with copies of good practice guidance on safe working practices.

Research Integrity training is available to all engaged in R&I activities via Moodle; [Becoming an Ethical Researcher](#) and [Research Ethics in Practice](#)

Information on safeguarding in ODA research can be found in Appendix 1.

10.Support and Welfare for Napier Staff and Students

Services which support the welfare of staff, including the University's Employee Assistance Programme and services available through the Occupational Health Service, are detailed on the [Human Resources intranet site](#). Staff or students can also report and seek support in relation to sexual misconduct or violence by reporting through the reportandsupport@napier.ac.uk email address.

Staff working within Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, in particular in the Counselling and Mental Wellbeing team, are experienced in responding to safeguarding issues either raised directly by students themselves or as a result of concerns raised by other members of the University community. Using a risk based approach students will be

offered a range of support and if necessary, referral out to other recognised professional sources of support: <https://my.napier.ac.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

Over the last three years our commitment to tackling gender-based violence has seen us introduce the [Report and Support](#) online platform, deliver a [Zero Tolerance](#) campaign and provide resources to support in-person and online training for our staff and students.

11.Criminal Conviction Disclosure & Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Individuals applying for employment at the University are required by law to self-disclose unspent/spent criminal convictions in line with the Rehabilitation of Offender Act (Scotland) 1974, and role requirements, any disclosure is considered, risk assessed and managed in the context of the recruitment process in line with the Policy Statement on Recruitment of Ex-Offenders and the data protection act.

Where staff members receive a criminal charge or conviction whilst in employment, this is considered and risk assessed based on a number of factors i.e. the nature of the role, the roles holders contact with staff, students, and member of the public and the details and circumstances/relevance of the conviction and a decision will be made what action is required and if it may be necessary to consider the matter further under the [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#).

Where a manager is creating a new role/post on a R&I project which may require the role holders to carry out 'regulated work', they should contact the [HR Team](#) in the first instance to enable an early assessment of the service/role to be made and whether the role is assessed as a regulated role and PVG membership is an essential criterion. As part of the funded project set up process RIE staff will review the project via the data management process. Where there may be work with vulnerable people RIE will complete a proforma summarising the research and send to the HR team (cc'ing the PI) for assessment of the role(s).

If the role holder as part of the research project is required to go abroad to conduct research and they are carrying out activities which would be considered regulated work in Scotland, they are required by the University, to join the PVG Scheme before they begin their research in the other country.

Individuals applying to join the University as a student are required, as part of the terms and conditions relating to their application, to declare any relevant unspent criminal convictions. Any declared convictions are investigated under the University's [Policy for Applicants with Declared Criminal Convictions](#). Consideration is given as to whether admission of the applicant would pose a significant and unacceptable risk to the University community and whether there are specific professional requirements related to the course applied for which need to be considered, including those requiring Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme membership.

Where students receive a criminal charge or conviction during their studies, they are required to disclose this to the University. Such disclosures will be considered against the [Student Conduct Regulations](#) in order to determine whether any further action is required.

12.Prevent Duty

The University has a statutory duty in terms of the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act 2015, 'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. The measures that have been taken by the University to address this statutory duty, including the steps staff and students should take to raise any concerns that they may have, are outlined on the [Prevent Duty intranet page](#).

Appendix 1: Sector Safeguarding resources

<https://www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/safeguarding-resources>

<http://www.transformingsociety.co.uk/2020/06/23/conducting-research-on-sensitive-and-traumatic-topics-during-a-pandemic/?fbclid=IwAR1Z2AFV16y2GhdsuhmL94abeoshN-Bw3M910XFr7xuxCAsDorMVktBe4s>

<https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/documents>

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ResearchInnovation/gcrf-october-2019-safeguarding.pdf>

<https://www.ukri.org/files/guidance-on-safeguarding-in-international-development-research/>

<https://www.ukri.org/files/safeguarding-in-international-development-research-companion-piece/>

<https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Global-Code-of-Conduct-Brochure.pdf>

<https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards-and-data/good-research-resource-hub/equitable-partnerships/>

<https://the-sra.org.uk/common/Uploaded%20files/SRA-safety-code-of-practice.pdf>

Appendix 2: Pre-award project checklist in Worktribe

All Y/N . Details required for yes answers.

Does the research involve human participants, data or samples?

Is the proposal clinical in nature?

Does the research involve the NHS or other healthcare setting?

Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?

Does the Research involve vulnerable people?

Will the research involve deliberately misleading participants (deception) in any way?

Is there a possible conflict of interest between researcher and participant that would affect the voluntary nature of the participation, e.g. managerial influence, Research using current students as participants?

Does the research require a Disclosure Scotland check?

Will the research require the use of assumed consent rather than informed consent? (For example when it may be impossible to obtain informed consent due to the setting for the research – e.g. observational studies/videoing/photography within a public space)

Is the information gathered from participants of a sensitive or personal nature?

Will any payment or reward be made to participants, beyond reimbursement or out-of-pocket expenses?

Is there any risk to respondents' anonymity in any report/thesis/publication from the research, even if real names are not used?

Will any covert research method be used in the research?

Does the research involve developing countries?

Are there environmental implications to the proposed research?

Does the research involve military applications?

Is the research investigating socially or culturally 'controversial' topics (for example pornography, extremist politics, or illegal activities)?

Have you identified any potential risks to the researcher in carrying out the research? (for example physical/emotional/social/economic risks?)

Does the research require external ethics clearance? (For example from the NHS or another institution)