

Ethics in Research Policy for Marino Institute of Education, 2016-2017

This Draft Ethics Policy for the Marino Institute of Education (MIE) is based on the Research Ethics Statement developed by the School of Education at the University of Dublin, Trinity College.

MIE is committed to the conduct of high-quality research that is guided by the latest understandings of research ethics and their place in all research design. This policy addresses ethical approval of research that is conducted in MIE and/or by MIE staff or students. In its research activity, the Institute is committed to ethical principles that include:

- a commitment to the well-being, protection and safety of participants;
- a duty to respect the rights and wishes of participants;
- an evaluation of the relative benefits of any research to groups and individuals
- a responsibility to conduct rigorous, academic research;
- a commitment to disseminate the results of research in an honest and truthful manner to all who may be affected by the research or those who should be informed about the research

There are a number of considerations that all research in the Institute must address. These include:

- minimising risk of harm
- informed consent and freedom to withdraw from involvement in research at any time
- avoidance of disclosure of non-processed or identifiable data
- data storage, access, retention and destruction
- awareness and recognition of power relations in asymmetrical educational relationships.

Some research in the Institute is conducted with children and members of vulnerable groups and in these cases further ethical demands must be met. These include complying with:

- a.) child protection principles¹
- b.) legal obligations and policy commitments in relation to children and members of vulnerable groups
- c.) an inclusive approach to research.

In order to ensure the highest level of ethical research, the Institute has appointed a committee with responsibility for this area, the Marino Ethics in Research Committee (MERC). The membership of the Marino Ethics in Research Committee is drawn from across the academic staff at the Marino Institute of Education, to reflect people from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In the future an external person with experience/expertise in the area may be invited to join the committee. In 2016-2017, the committee is made up of the following members:

Seán Delaney	(Registrar, Chairperson of Committee)
Gene Mehigan	(Principal Lecturer)
Michael Flannery	(Senior Lecturer)

¹ These are outlined in Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2012). *Guidance for developing ethical projects involving children*. Dublin: Author.

Karin Bacon	(Lecturer)
Anne McMorrough	(Lecturer)
Rory McDaid	(Lecturer)
Trevor Purtill	(Research & Development Programme Manager)
Mai Ralph	(Administrative Assistant, ex officio)

In the case of staff research that requires ethical approval, and where ethical approval has not been granted in another recognised institution or body, all such research must be approved by the Marino Ethics in Research Committee.

If ethical approval for research conducted by staff members has been granted elsewhere, a copy of the letter of approval should be given to MERC prior to the commencement of the research.

In the case of student research projects at all levels (undergraduate and postgraduate) it is the responsibility of the student to complete a Research Ethics Approval Application form in consultation with their supervisor or other nominated person approved by MERC² and, following review by the supervisor or other nominated person approved by MERC, submit it to the Marino Ethics in Research Committee. In the case of low-risk projects, the supervisor or other nominated person approved by MERC has the authority to sign-off that all ethical requirements are being met in the design and conduct of the project, or she/he may refer the proposal to MERC for its consideration. Copies of all ethical approval documentation will be stored securely and made available to MERC, as requested.

The Procedure for Ethical Approval

- 1.) Students are required to read carefully the guidance notes at the start of the application form (Appendix 2).
- 2.) The form must be completed electronically, using as much space as needed to include all required information and submitted both **electronically and in hard copy**.
- 3.) The completed form **MUST** be checked and authorised (NO electronic signatures, please) by the supervisor and the student prior to submission. Any unsigned forms will be returned.
- 4.) The summary below describes the action taken for Levels 0, 1 or 2 approvals.

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2
Student and supervisor agree that research is Level 0. Student completes form, which is signed by supervisor.	Student completes form and submits to supervisor.	Student completes form and submits to supervisor.
Supervisor keeps a copy of signed statement (refer to MERC if needed) and submits a copy to MERC administrator for archiving.	Supervisor checks, signs submits form (or returns to student for submission) to MERC administrator.	Supervisor checks, signs and submits form (or returns to student for submission) to MERC administrator.
	MERC – approves or refers application, which is	MERC – approves / refers / involves ‘expert’ from

² Appropriate and adequate CPD would need to be provided for this person in relation to ethics in research.

	communicated to student by the MERC administrator, who files a copy for archive.	outside Committee/expert for advice. The decision is communicated to student by the MERC administrator, who files a copy for archive.
--	--	---

5.) All appeals to the operation of this policy will be considered by the President of Marino Institute of Education, who may make a decision or refer the application elsewhere (typically to another ethics board) for consideration.

6.) Procedures for monitoring ongoing studies require mandatory annual reporting from approved studies.

7.) All modifications which require ethics approval must be submitted to the MERC and approved prior to implementation. Annual reporting to MERC is standard procedure.

8.) All applications are submitted initially to the MERC administrator and retained & archived after approval by the MERC Administrator.

9.) Exemplar templates for **consent forms** are available to download from the following MIE website: <https://www.mie.ie/merc>

10.) Questions concerning the ethical conduct of research in the Marino Institute of Education can be addressed to the Chair of the MERC.

11.) MERC will provide continuing professional development as necessary or as requested on ethics in research for members of the MERC committee, prospective members of the MERC committee, personnel who will have delegated powers of signing off that ethical requirements of projects have been met, and for other staff members.

12.) MERC will generally hold four meetings per year (September, November, January and June). At the start of each year, MERC will inform staff members of the dates on which the meetings will be held for that academic year. Documents for consideration by MERC must be submitted at least ten days prior to the subsequent meeting.

13.) This policy will be effective from September 2015 and will be reviewed in June 2016 in light of its operation.

Appendix 1

Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals 2016/17

Marino Institute of Education

This form is based on the form developed by the School of Education, Trinity College. It was Modified for use in Marino Institute of Education, an Associated College of the University of Dublin, Trinity College

Notes for Staff and Students prior to completing application form:

1. The University requires all research activity involving people as participants to be subjected to ethical scrutiny and this form is designed to enable the Marino Ethics in Research Committee (MERC) to assess any research proposed by members of staff or students, where the research has not been subject to ethical scrutiny by another ethics board.
2. **If your research does not involve human (or animal) participants, their material or data you do not need to proceed with this form, for example:**

1. Quality assurance studies (e.g. assessment of one's own teaching practice)
2. Audits of standard practice (not involving identifiable records)
3. Research on publicly available information, documents or data

Such research is considered to be at Level 0. If you are a student, please agree this course of action with your supervisor who will need to confirm this in writing to the Marino Ethics in Research Committee.

3. You must state whether you require ethical approval at **Level 1** or **Level 2**.

Level 1 ethical approval

This is **no risk to relatively low risk research** – i.e. research carrying little or no risks or discomfort greater than usually encountered during normal daily life, for example:

1. Anonymous surveys of a non-intrusive personal nature.
2. Unrecorded and anonymous observation of individuals in public areas.
3. Analysis of irrevocably anonymised and appropriately collected data.
4. Interviews (consensual) with non-vulnerable adults.
5. **Some Action research**
6. Surveys where respondents can be identified and where respondents have given appropriate consent.

Level 2 ethical approval

Moderate to high-risk research – i.e. risk or discomfort is greater than that usually encountered during normal daily life – includes ALL RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN (ie under 18 years of age) AND VULNERABLE ADULTS.

MODERATE RISK

1. Surveys asking questions of a sensitive or private nature
2. Questionnaires or observational studies involving children or vulnerable adults.
3. Research where there is a risk of a participant feeling undue pressure to participate by virtue of his/her relationship with the researcher (e.g. student/supervisor; teacher/student; assessor/student).
4. Projects involving a justifiable degree of deception.
5. Some action research.

HIGH RISK

6. Research involving children and vulnerable adults.
7. Research where identifiable information obtained may have legal, economic or social consequences for research subjects.
8. Research that may identify illegal activity.
9. Projects where each subject is paid (over and above token gestures).
10. Research that may potentially endanger the subjects, and/or researchers, and/or third parties, and/or the environment.
11. Research that may have a direct military role.
12. Research conducted outside Ireland.
13. Research involving psychological intervention.
14. Research where a potentially beneficial or harmful treatment, information or learning method may be withheld from some participants.
15. Video recording or observation.

Additional notes:

- i. In situations where research ethics approval has been granted by an appropriate research ethics committee elsewhere, the submission may qualify for fast-tracked approval processing in MIE.
- ii. Unless otherwise noted, research involving adults assumes adults with a capacity to consent.
- iii. Vulnerable groups/persons are described as:
 - individuals who face excessive risk of being enrolled in research, including those with limitations in their ability to provide informed consent to research because of factors such as immaturity, cognitive impairment, or language competence.
 - vulnerability can also stem from individuals' relationships with others, and it is imperative that coercive situations are avoided. Such cases may occur when an employee/student/dependent is asked to participate in research being conducted by a supervisor/mentor.
- iv. Additional social factors, such as poverty and lack of access to health care, can also make individuals vulnerable to coercion, exploitation or other risks and need to be considered in reviewing applications.

4. The primary focus for approval is research involving people. Where the participants include **children or vulnerable adults**, research cannot proceed unless all researchers involved have obtained Garda vetting. In principle, all research in Marino Institute of Education should be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of all participants (including to privacy of data,

confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate), causes no harm to participants or researchers, and requires the active, fully informed consent of all participants and their parents, carers, guardians or relevant responsible others.

5. In the case of **Level 2 ethical approval applications**, consent forms, **must be attached to the application**, and therefore demonstrate clearly that prospective participants are being fully informed about the purpose of the research and their role in it, how their data will be gathered, the purposes to which their data will be put and how their right to privacy (confidentiality and anonymity) will be respected (for research involving children, use the guidelines produced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs:

http://www.dcyu.gov.ie/documents/Publications/Ethics_Guidance.pdf .

6. Educational research undertaken outside Ireland must adhere to the same ethical standards as research Ireland. Any additional regulations (e.g. police clearance) and cultural sensitivities of the host country must also be observed.
7. Some **Level 2 ethical approval applications** may need to be referred to expertise beyond that available to MERC where proposals:
 - have the potential to cause harm to participants or researchers, directly physical or psychological;
 - may give rise to situations in which the researchers have to make statutory disclosure of illegal activity, whether on the part of participants or others;
 - seek to deceive participants for any reason;
 - may give rise to situations that may put the participants or researchers in any form of jeopardy.

Such cases and the nature of referral will be decided by MERC on a case-by-case basis.

8. If any changes to the approved research proposal are made:
 - i. **For Students:** these must be discussed with your supervisor, and may require additional ethical approval;
 - ii. **For Staff:** substantive changes need to be clarified with the MERC and may require additional approval.
9. This form along with any correspondence that is undertaken as a follow-up (e.g. approval letter, request for amendments etc) will be kept as a formal record of the scrutiny process, for inspection as required by the University authorities. As such, proposers should ensure that proposals are presented to a professional standard as they will be returned for resubmission if deemed not to have been adequately prepared.

Please email the completed ethical approval application form, consent form(s) and a cover email requesting ethics review to the MERC administrator: (Mai Ralph, mai.ralph@mie.ie)

In the case of student applicants, the form MUST be signed off by the supervisor prior to submission, or it will be returned.

Appendix 2

Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals

Title of Research

Research Reference Number³

Researcher's Name

Email Address

Category of Proposer (please tick)

Student ☐ **Principal Investigator (Staff)** ☐

If you are a student, please complete the following: Student Number:

Course of Study: **B.Ed.**____ **B.Sc.**____ **PME**____ **MES**____ **OTHER:**____

Please indicate the level of approval required (see accompanying notes).

Level 0

☐

Level 1

☐

Level 2

☐

1. Please give a structured abstract of the proposed research, including the methods you intend to use (approx. 300 words).

³ Research reference number (available from Mai Ralph prior to submitting the application). This number should be at the start of the file name of any document or mail submitted in relation to this application. Please follow the reference number with 1, 2, 3, etc. corresponding with the number of documents submitted with the application.

Please tick ✓

2. Please answer the following questions in relation to your proposed research. Questions (b), (c) or (d) will require detailed explanations if answered 'yes' and will be referred for additional scrutiny by the MERC. Answering 'Yes' to	Yes	No
a. Does the research involve work with children (under-18) or vulnerable adults? If 'Yes', has appropriate Garda clearance (or equivalent) been obtained (include details)?		
Please provide the date of issue on the Certificate of Garda Vetting.		
b. Does the research involve work with students on a module you teach or assess?		
c. Could any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher(s)?		
d. Could any aspect of the research produce information that could lead to criminal prosecution of the participants or others?		
e. Is deception of the participants planned in any aspect of the research? If yes, provide details.		
f. Does any aspect of the research involve patients (or their relatives or carers) or other users of health and social care services, the premises or facilities of such services, access to personal records or the participation of health or social care staff?		

<p>3. (a) Who are the proposed participants, e.g. teachers; students?</p> <p>(b) What is your relationship with them? (If you are in a position of authority, for example, indicate how you will deal with the potential influences of such a relationship.)</p>
--

<p>4. (a) How will you recruit participants?</p> <p>(b) Please detail any ethical aspects that must be considered, including the proposed use of any incentives.</p>
--

<p>5. (a) What is the location(s) at which the data collection will be undertaken?</p> <p>(b) Describe any circumstances that might give rise to security concerns for participants or researchers?</p> <p>(c) Describe any conflicts of interest where data might be critical of working practices, people etc. or disclosure of illegal activities?</p>
--

6. Please indicate how informed consent of all participants will be gained. For participants under the age of 18, indicate how the informed consent of both the participant and the participant's parent/guardian will be gained. (Draft consent forms MUST be attached – see question 8 for guidance.)

7. (a) Please indicate how the participants' rights to privacy (inc. confidentiality and anonymity) and the privacy of their data will be protected. Highlight potential limitations of confidentiality in the ethics form and information sheets for participants (e.g. for small samples or insider research and how this will be addressed).

(b) Please also indicate how the data will be stored (and ultimately destroyed as appropriate).

8. Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of consent. (Note that the consent forms that must accompany this application; any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).	Please tick ✓
I have attached (an) appropriate consent form(s) which include the freedom to withdraw at any stage without having to offer a reason.	
Each consent form has full contact details of the researcher to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries	
Each consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate	
Each consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes	
Each consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate	
Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, and that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to provide a reason	
Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s)	

Has your proposal been submitted to any other Research Ethics Committee? Yes / No If yes, please provide details:

Declaration by All Proposers:

I have read and understood Marino Institute of Education's policy on ethics in educational research: and the Trinity College Dublin Good Research Practice Policies:

I declare that the details above reflect accurately my research proposal and I undertake to seek updated approval if substantive changes are proposed after this submission. I have consulted an authoritative set of educational research guidelines.

Signed: Date

(Students Only) My proposals are based on consultation with my supervisor(s).

Signed: Date

Supervisor's Signature: **(Student Proposal Only)**, first supervisor only if there are two)

Signed: Date

In instances where supervisors feel that their specialised expertise may be important information for the MERC to take into account (e.g. in relation to researching highly sensitive areas such as trauma/abuse), please submit an additional page with any relevant information.

Final Approval Signed-Off by Research Ethics Committee

Signed: Date

Appendix 3

LIST OF RESEARCH METHODS THAT DO NOT TYPICALLY REQUIRE ETHICS APPROVAL

- Historical research in education
- Research that uses pre-existing data in the public domain (e.g. data from the Growing up in Ireland study)
- Review of literature or research
- Document analysis

Appendix 4

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND USEFUL READING RE. ETHICS IN RESEARCH

British Educational Research Association (2011). Ethical guidelines for educational research. London: Author.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2012). *Guidance for developing ethical projects involving children*. Dublin: Author.

Strike, K.A. (2006). The ethics of educational research. In Green, J.L., Camilli, G., & Elmore, P.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

Version	Date	Update by	Comment
1	10 October 2014	SD	Amended TCD School of Education Policy. For consideration by MERC.
2	16 October 2014	SD (Following consideration at MERC)	For consultation through C na R before returning to MERC
3	8 January 2015	SD (Following consultation through C na R)	For final consideration by MERC before going to C na R for ratification
4	14 th January 2015	SD (Following MERC meeting)	For final consideration by C na R.
5	2 nd February 2015	SD (Following C na R Meeting)	To be reviewed in June 2016
6	20 October 2016	MR (Following request from SD)	

