



LINCOLN COLLEGE

ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

POLICY CQ/PO/23

SPONSORS

Assistant Principal – Higher Education
Director of Performance and Standards

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Lincoln College strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, sexual orientation, spent criminal convictions, age or any other inappropriate grounds.

LINCOLN COLLEGE

ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

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LINCOLN COLLEGE

ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

1 PURPOSE

This policy applies to all staff and students of Lincoln College who contribute to Higher Education (HE) research. Staff and students are responsible for ensuring that all research is conducted in accordance with this policy. They are entitled to research ethics procedures and guidelines that are clear, accessible and compliant with the requirements of any external awarding body.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the HE research ethics procedures are implemented consistently across the college and it identifies the core principles underpinning ethical research conduct. All research must be conducted according to the requirements of external awarding bodies and the standards and obligations of ethical, legal and professional frameworks. In addition, the HE Research Ethics Policy and procedures are fully informed by the revised QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance for Research Degrees (although we do not offer research degrees the good practice contained here underpins our approach to developing students' research skills), the [Research Excellence Framework 2014](#), [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity \(UUK 2012\)](#), and the [Research Councils United Kingdom \(RCUK\) Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct February 2013 \(updated April 2017\)](#)

2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Anonymity: When participation is anonymous it is impossible to know whether or not an individual participated and there is no way to determine the connection between individual participants and the results. Data is often 'anonymised' by removing identifiers and reference to any identifying characteristics; data could still be tracked back to an individual participant if required.

Confidentiality: Data is confidential if participants provide personally-identifying information but the connection between participant and results is not shared.

Informed consent: For consent to be valid it must be freely given by a person, acting voluntarily, who has the necessary capacity and is sufficiently informed.

Personal data: Any information that can be used to directly or indirectly identify the person, including a name, photo, email address, bank details, social networking posts, medical information or a computer IP address.

Research: In line with the UK funding bodies' definition, research is defined as "a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared."(REF; 2020)

Research integrity: Research integrity is underpinned by the fundamental principles of reliability, honesty, respect and accountability.

Risk assessment: Any new research activity should be assessed for potential risks: to the researcher, research subjects (humans, animals & the environment), the general public, university's reputation and financial and legal liability.

Scholarly activity: "An activity or activities with the potential to: create or affirm knowledge and/or expertise of a subject or discipline, develop or enhance understanding of a subject or discipline, develop or enhance methodologies for the delivery of a subject or discipline. To be accepted as research and scholarly activity this activity must be shared with peers, disseminated across the institution and possibly beyond and archived in ways which are easily accessible to all staff." (AoC; 2014)

Student: Any person who has registered on a programme of study with the College, which can include undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. This also includes students from elsewhere visiting as part of an exchange or similar programme.

Vulnerable participants: Vulnerable populations include under 18s, people with learning or communication difficulties, patients in care, people in custody or on probation, and people engaged in illegal activities, such as drug abuse. A vulnerable or at-risk adult is an adult who needs community care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

3 RELATED POLICIES

The Ethics and Research Integrity Policy should be read and implemented in association with the following college policies:

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Internet, Email and Computer Acceptable Use Policy
- Staff Conduct Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Information Security Policy
- Social Media Policy
- The Academic Contract (for purposes of intellectual property)

4 SCOPE

This policy and associated procedures apply to all research undertaken under the auspices of the college, and relates to research activities involving human participants and personal data of humans only.

Any research undertaken by staff or students (undergraduate or postgraduate) of the college should be subject to ethical scrutiny. Researchers are required to demonstrate that this scrutiny has occurred. Research supervisors have overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate ethical scrutiny of their students' research occurs and must advise on the processes required.

Responsibility for undertaking the scrutiny will depend on the nature of the research. While demonstrating that ethical scrutiny of research projects has occurred is the responsibility of supervisors, under the college's procedure not all research projects will need to be comprehensively reviewed. Projects with no human participants or very low risk human participant projects can be approved following a review undertaken within the academic curriculum area.

Ethical approval is required for the following activities:

- Independent student projects (including dissertation and final major project)
- Projects conducted by staff (including internal action research and externally funded projects)
- Collaborative staff-student projects

Ethical approval is not required for the following:

- Staff undertaking qualifications with another institution where ethical approval has been granted
- Small scale data collection as part of the teaching and assessment of modules other than dissertation or independent research project. Lincoln College does, however, expect staff and students to act in accordance with the ethical principles noted in section 5 when undertaking research for any module or activity

5 PRINCIPLES

The Ethics and Research Integrity Policy has been designed, and should be implemented, with the ethical principles of our validating institutions and the British Association of Educational Research (BERA) as key reference points. As such, all staff and students of Lincoln College should abide by and role model best practice in the following principles when considering, designing and undertaking research.

Lincoln College is committed to ensuring that all research activity is undertaken so that:

- Beneficence is maximised and non-maleficence is limited
- The welfare of all participants is ensured and that their dignity and human rights are respected
- Risk to participants, researchers and third parties are identified and managed
- Data is secure and appropriately managed
- New knowledge is disseminated appropriately and with integrity

Lincoln College expects all staff and students who are considering or who are undertaking research to engage with the college's commitment to conduct research to high ethical standards, to take part in the ethical review process and fulfil their moral and legal responsibilities in respect of the rights welfare of all participants. Specifically:

- **Beneficence and non-maleficance**

Beneficence is any action that is to the benefit of others; non-maleficance is the “avoidance of harm”. These principles together should form the basis of all ethical considerations of research.

- **The welfare of all participants**

Staff and students must acknowledge the dignity and autonomy of individuals, and requires that people with reduced autonomy be provided with special consideration and protection. Staff and students must also ensure that where participants belong to a certain population, for example (but not limited to) children, prisoners, people with learning difficulties or severe illnesses, they are appropriately protected.

- **Risk to participants, researchers and third parties**

Researchers have a moral obligation to minimise the risk of physical and/or mental harm to themselves, other human participants and the environment which may result from their research. Research should normally only be undertaken if the known risks can be reasonably mitigated and approval is obtained from the appropriate Ethical Approval Committee.

Staff or students wishing to undertake covert data collection or research which involves deception must have the permission of the college’s Ethics Approval Committee.

- **Data is secure and appropriately managed**

Participants have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the college’s Information Security Policy. Staff and students must, therefore, maintain participants’ confidentiality at all stages of the research process. The identity and personal details of all participants must be protected and not released or published without the permission of the participant.

Staff and students should only collect the absolute minimum information that is necessary from participants to enable the research to take place; with all such collected data being stored securely at all times.

- **New knowledge is disseminated appropriately and with integrity**

Staff and students should communicate their findings and the potential impact of their research in a clear, unambiguous manner, and in language deemed appropriate to the intended audience(s). Staff and students have a responsibility to make the results of their research public for the benefit of their field of study, policymakers and the wider public.

Staff and students must report their findings honestly and openly, and must not bring themselves or the college into disrepute by in any way falsifying, distorting, suppressing, selectively reporting or sensationalising their findings.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Researchers have an ethical obligation to refrain from tampering with data. Thus, research data and data analyses should not be fabricated, altered nor discarded. In addition, researchers have a responsibility to exercise reasonable care in processing data to ensure no errors affect the results.

Researchers are required to declare any conflicts of interest and should be aware of the potential influence of personal or commercial interests on their work and take all practical measures to ensure that information is presented without distortion.

Nothing that is said in this policy will absolve the responsibility of the researcher to act in accordance with the best interests of the participants, and researchers should undertake research legally and in accordance with any relevant professional codes of conduct.

Supervisors are required to attend annual mandatory training in order to ensure consistency of practice and compliance with the associated institutional procedures for consideration of ethical approval. Only those in attendance are 'licensed' to supervise students and to review requests for ethical approval.

Where the college is approached by external individuals or organisations who wish to conduct research involving the college's staff, students, facilities and/or data, or any other thing owned or controlled by the college, the college must ensure that any such research is ethical and aligns with this Ethics and Research Integrity Policy. Approval of such requests shall be considered in the same manner as an internal staff or student request for ethical approval, however, ethical approval from the external applicant.

7 RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Lincoln College defines a child as any person(s) under the age of 18 years. Lincoln College staff and students should seek to collect data from adults in the first instance, and only where this is not possible for their research, should seek to gather data from children.

For a child to be engaged in a research activity, Lincoln College staff and students must obtain informed consent from the child's legal guardian and obtain the child's agreement to act as a participant. The only other exception to this is research using anonymous data held previously, for example, by a school or institution.

As directed section 5, Lincoln College staff and students must consider and ensure the physical, psychological and social wellbeing of any participant and be particularly aware of this when involving children in research. This should include, but is not limited to, being aware of a child becoming distressed, avoiding incentives or pressure to participate, protecting children from exploitation, procedures to deal with the disclosure of illegal activity and obligations under child safeguarding.

When conducting research involving vulnerable adults, staff and students should always, without compromising the rights of the individual, consult with the person with duty of care.

8 OTHER ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Health and Safety

Adherence to the principles of the ethics policy supports compliance with UK legislative requirements articulated in the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the College's Health and Safety Policy.

As part of this adherence, staff and students must carry out rigorous risk assessments for all researchers and participants involved in the research to ensure good ethical practice. The risk assessment must consider those that are directly involved in the research as well as for those that may be indirectly affected by its conduct including the environment.

Staff and students must ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements must be made for all involved in the research activities in consultation with their supervisor prior to the conducting the research.

Safeguarding

Lincoln College has a statutory duty to ensure that all young people and vulnerable adults are safe. The college will promote the safeguarding and welfare of all children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the Children's Act 1989 and the Children's Act 2004 and section 175 of the Education Act 2002. Staff and students of Lincoln College must take into consideration the safeguarding and welfare of children and vulnerable adults at all stages of the research process and ensure that the college's statutory duty is being carried out.

Should a child or vulnerable adult disclose, at any stage of the research process, abuse or safeguarding issues, the staff member or student must report this disclosure to the relevant authority. Section 5 of the college's Safeguarding Policy provides clear guidance and must be consulted in such situations.

Funding

All college staff and students are obliged to give ethical consideration to their engagement and collaboration with local, regional, national and international external organisations and any conflicts of interest this may cause. This includes the source of funding for academic or commercial purposes and the types of activities of the external organisation beyond the collaborative project.

9 TRAINING

Staff

As outlined in section 6, staff are required to attend annual centralised training in order to obtain and maintain their 'license' to supervise those undertaking research activity and to review research ethics clearance forms submitted by others.

Student

The structure and design of the academic curriculum is set to ensure that students complete sufficient preparatory activity in advance of a dissertation or project module commencing which should include:

- an introduction to a range of research methods and methodological approaches
- guidance on how to collect data and evidence
- guidance on how to analyse and interpret data and/or information
- an introduction to research ethics and the fundamental principles and practices that underpin ethical research

10 RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

Where a Lincoln College staff member or student does not, knowingly or otherwise, comply with this Ethics and Research Integrity Policy, this will usually be deemed as research misconduct. Should an allegation of research misconduct be made the staff member or student will be investigated under the auspices of the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. Examples of research misconduct may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
- Deception in relation to research proposals
- Unethical behaviour in the conduct of research
- Deviation from good research practice, where this results in Unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment
- Undertaking data collection when not qualified to do so
- Fabrication, falsification, corruption or inappropriate disclosure of research data
- Distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
- Plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- Fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
- Collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others

11 PROCESS OF OBTAINING ETHICAL APPROVAL

All requests for ethical approval must be made using the Lincoln College research ethics clearance form (see appendix 2).

Supervisors are responsible for supporting students to complete the form correctly. They are also responsible, as stated in section 4, for ensuring that

ethical scrutiny has taken place. Supervisors must sign to recommend an ethical approval application for consideration before it is submitted to the HE administration team.

Once the supervisor has signed 'Section C' of the research ethics clearance form it must be submitted to HE@lincolncollege.ac.uk.

The level of review undertaken is dependent on the type of research proposed. Secondary data analysis poses a lower level of risk than primary data collection and therefore projects of this nature are reviewed at academic curriculum level only. Projects involving primary data collection methods must be considered by two reviewers (one from the academic curriculum area and one from a different area of the college).

Reviewers are required to assess the risk associated with the proposed project. If the associated risks are deemed to be low the reviewers may decide on one of the following outcomes:

1. Approved with minor amendments
2. Approved with major amendments
3. Approved in full
4. Rejected

Any amendments or recommendations are recorded on the central database for Research Ethics Clearance forms and this information must be communicated back to the student or staff member by the project supervisor.

The proposal must be referred to a full ethics committee where the reviewers deem the associated risks to be high. The Ethics Committee must then make a decision in line with the outcomes listed above.

Data collection must not commence until research ethics clearance has been approved in full. A copy of the approved form must be appended to the final dissertation or project submission.

12 APPEALING A DECISION

A researcher has the right to appeal against the decision of the Research Ethics Committee, which will be made clear in the written confirmation of the decision, on any of the following grounds:

- a) That there existed material circumstances relating directly to the case of which the reviewing committee was not aware;
- b) That procedural irregularities occurred in the review process, which were of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the committee would have reached the same conclusion had the irregularities not occurred; and
- c) That there is demonstrable evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate review.

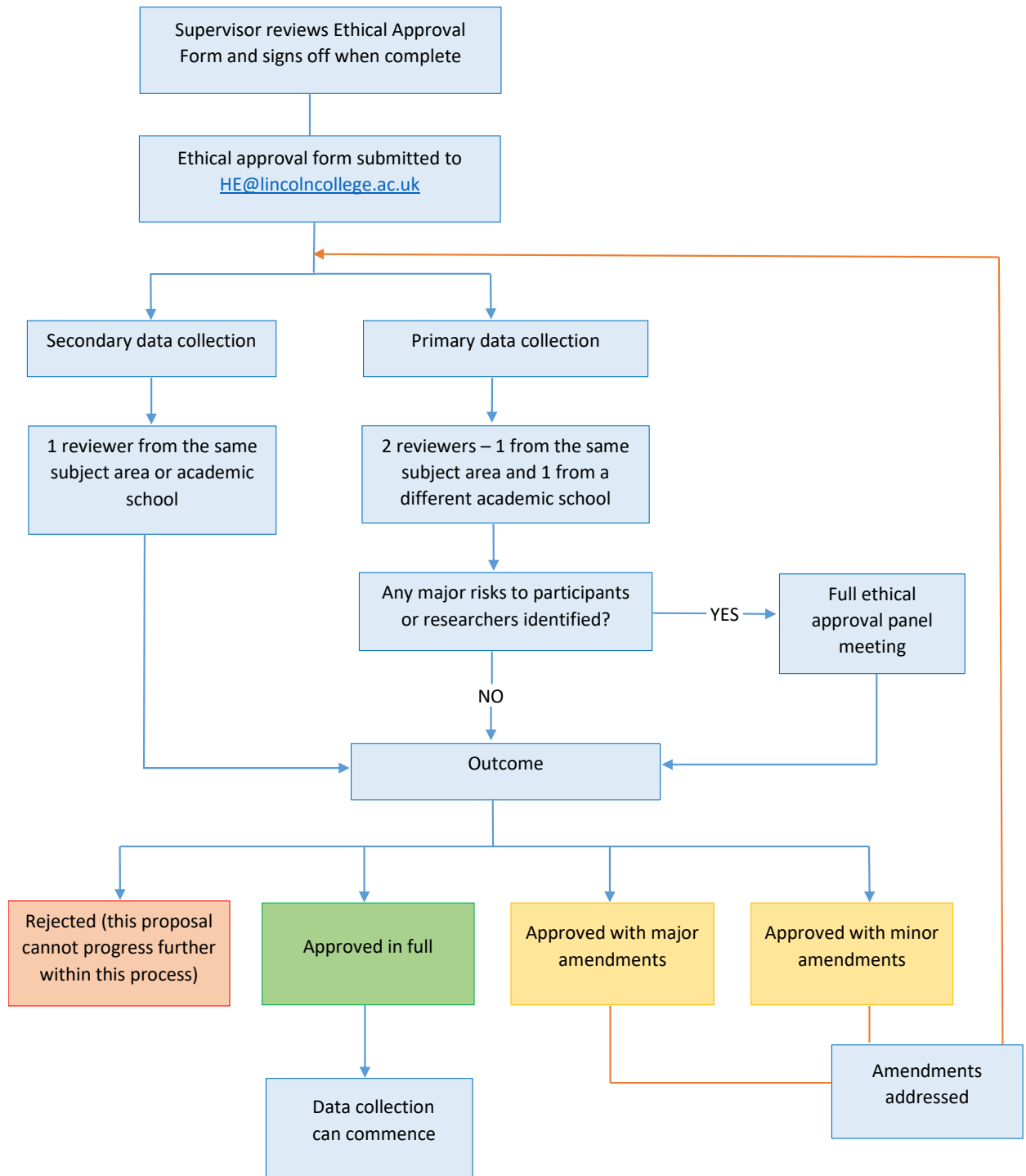
Appeals must be made, in writing, to College Appeals Panel and be received within ten working days of receipt of the written confirmation of the Research Ethics Committee decision.

All appeals must follow the procedure noted in the College Appeals Panel Policy and Procedure (Policy CQ/PO/26) which can be obtained by contacting quality@lincolncollege.ac.uk

13 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

The Learning Standards Quality Committee will review the Ethics and Research Integrity Policy on an annual basis and make recommendations for its development, in conjunction with relevant external bodies.

APPENDIX 1 – ETHICAL APPROVAL PROCESS FLOW CHART



Research Ethics Clearance

Note: You must wait until your supervisor and (if applicable) your placement mentor have signed this form BEFORE commencing any data collection with human participants

| Section A: Project details | |
|--|---|
| Student name | |
| Student number | |
| Level at which study is being undertaken | <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Staff |
| Programme | |
| Module code and name | |
| Title of research project | |
| <p>Key literature (formatted accordingly): <i>Please provide a brief overview to the key literature that provides a rationale for your proposed study</i></p> | |
| <p>About your project <i>Please give a brief description of the project (methodological approach and aims)</i></p> | |
| <p>Research questions/hypothesis: <i>What questions does your research project seek to answer / what hypotheses are you looking to test?</i></p> | |

Description of method

PARTICIPANTS (primary research only)

How many participants are you expecting (approx.) and where will they be from? State the sampling procedure that will be used.

-

EQUIPMENT and PROTOCOL

Please state clearly how you are expecting to conduct this study, including any equipment that will be utilised.

-

RESULTS

How will the data obtained be analysed i.e. statistical analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, etc?

-

Ethical considerations

*Detail any ethical considerations here. You should consider and make reference to the use of **research information sheets**, obtaining **informed consent**, ensuring **anonymity/confidentiality** and the **storage/destruction of any data** collected.*

If your research sample includes young people or vulnerable adults, please ALSO indicate how your research design accommodates the ethical guidance offered by BERA or other related professional associations.

Type of data to be collected

Identify the type of data that you intend to collect:

- Primary** (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups, practical testing)
- Secondary*** (e.g. literature reviews, open source data)

**Continue to section C if you are only collecting secondary data*

Section B: Potential risks to researchers and participants

Please answer the following questions in relation to your research project. If you answer “yes” to any of the following statements, you will need to provide more detailed information about your project and outline how you have addressed any relevant ethical considerations in the box below.

1. Will the true purpose of the research be concealed from the participants?
YES NO

2. Will you encounter foreseeable risks to your physical safety as a result of undertaking the research?
YES NO

3. Might you encounter risks to your emotional safety (e.g. working with documents of a sensitive or distressing nature, or participants who may become distressed)?
YES NO

4. Is it possible that this research will lead to the disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect, or other information that would require the researchers to breach confidentiality conditions agreed with participants?
YES NO

5. Does the research require any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures (e.g. massage treatments, acupuncture, physical training or testing)?
YES NO

6. If you need to travel beyond your usual place of work/study to conduct your research, will there be particular risks associated with this travel?
YES NO

7. Will you visit participants in their own homes?
YES NO

8. Will you be using the internet to collect your data, recruit participants or at any other point in the research project?
YES NO

9. Will your research explore topics that may be deemed contentious or sensitive or are linked to illegality?

YES NO

10. Will you need to address any considerations of cultural difference during your project?

YES NO

11. Does your project give rise to any issues related to terrorism or radicalisation?

YES NO

12. Will you be at increased risk of exposure to harmful substances, e.g. chemicals, or infectious illnesses?

YES NO

13. Do you anticipate any challenges with controlling the dissemination of your findings, in due course?

YES NO

14. Are any of the participants known to:

Be under 18 years of age?

YES NO

Be physically or mentally ill?

YES NO

Have a disability?

YES NO

Be members of a vulnerable or stigmatized minority?

YES NO

Be in a dependent relationship with the researchers?

YES NO

Have difficulty in reading and/or comprehending any printed material distributed as part of the research process?

YES NO

Be vulnerable in other ways?

YES NO

Additional Information

Please provide more detailed information regarding how you will avert any potential ethical issues.

Section C: Approval outcome**Signature: student**

I confirm that I have considered and understood the Research Ethics Policy and the ethics of completing the above research project.

I also confirm that I am competent to undertake this research.

Student signature:

Date:

Supervisor comments:

Supervisor recommendation:

- Progress to Research Ethics Reviewers
- Resubmission required

Supervisor signature:

Date:

Section D: Office use only

Signatures: Research Ethics Supervisors

Decision:

- Approved
- Approved with minor consideration (see below)
- Referred to Research Ethics Committee
- Rejected

| | | |
|--|--|-------|
| Research ethics reviewer 1 name (subject specialist): | | Date: |
| Research ethics reviewer 2 name: | | Date: |
| <p>Signature: Placement supervisor/mentor (if relevant) Signature to confirm that it is appropriate to carry out this research project in your institution</p> | | |
| Placement supervisor/mentor name: | | |
| Placement supervisor/mentor signature: | | Date: |

Major / minor recommendations

The project has provisional been approved provided that the following considerations are undertaken

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |

Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheet



Title of the research project:

What is the project about?

Who is the researcher?

Institution and Contact Details:

| Institution | Email Address |
|-------------|---------------|
| | |

What will my participation in the research involve?

Will there be any benefits in taking part?

Will there be any risks in taking part?

What happens if I decide I don't want to take part during the actual research study, or decide I don't want the information I've given to be used?

How will you ensure my contribution is anonymous?

Please note that your confidentiality and anonymity cannot be assured if, during the research, it comes to light you are involved in illegal or harmful behaviours which I may disclose to the appropriate authorities.

Appendix 2 - Research consent form

Title of research project:

Name of researcher:

By signing below:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to take part in this research project and for the data to be used as the researcher sees fit, including publication and other forms of dissemination as appropriate.

For parents only:

4. I consent to my child(ren) being approached to see if they wish to take part

Name of participant/parent:

Signature:

Date:

Name of researcher:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3 – Risk assessment template

RESEARCH ETHICS RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

This form should be used to support the assessment of risks associated with your research project and their mitigation. This must be completed and submitted where relevant.

Prior to completion, if there is any aspect of the risks or risk management process associated with your proposed research that you feel unsure about then it is **your responsibility** (as the researcher) to seek further guidance.

| Identified Risks | Likelihood | Potential Impact/Outcome | Risk Management/Mitigating Factors |
|---|-----------------|---|--|
| Identify the risks/hazards present | High/Medium/Low | Who might be harmed and how? | Evaluate the risks and decide on the precautions, e.g., Health and Safety |
| <i>Discussion of a sensitive topic in an interview has potential to cause distress to participant</i> | <i>Medium</i> | <i>Participant:</i> • <i>Psychological stress</i> <i>Researcher:</i> • <i>Anxiety about dealing with a complex situation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Offer to cease interview</i> • <i>Signpost participant to external/internal support services</i> |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Appendix 4 – External placement / off-site data collection request letter



Date
Contact name
Head of School or institution
Address

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear [insert contact name]

My name is [insert name], and I am currently enrolled on the [insert programme of study] programme at Lincoln College. The research I wish to conduct for my [e.g. undergraduate dissertation] involves [insert adaptation of title of study e.g. "the exploration and description of the career development aspirations of rural school children in key stage 4"].

This project will be conducted under the supervision of [insert supervisor name and contact details]. I am hereby seeking your consent to [what do you want consent for? E.g. "conduct a series of focus groups with 10 - 12 young people in key stage 4"].

I have provided you with a copy of my [dissertation, project or thesis] proposal which includes the participant information and research consent forms to be used in the research process.

Upon completion of the study, I plan to submit my work for assessment [insert any plans for wider dissemination of your findings also]. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [insert email address].

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely, [name of researcher]

Approved by (Supervisor):

Supervisor name

Title

Date