Research ethics

Humanities Postgraduate Research Skills Training

Dr Lisa Bernasek (Humanities) and Anne Tarrant
(Research & Innovation Services)
30 April 2014

Objectives

- Discuss ethical guidelines for research in the Humanities

- Reflect on ethical considerations in your own research and other research situations

- Gain practical information about ethical approval processes, including ERGO

Session overview

- Presentation of ethics and values in research and Faculty of Humanities guidelines

- Small group discussion on ethics scenarios

- Practical guidance on paperwork and ERGO

- Individual research ethics planning and discussion

Ethics and values in research

- Ethics and values part of the research process

- No such thing as 'value-free' research

- All research has ethical factors to consider

    - Research with human participants (questionnaires, interviews, participant observation)

    - Research with archival material or cultural heritage

- All research students in Faculty of Humanities will need to engage with the ethics procedures

Values in the research process

- Interest leading to research

- Aims, objectives and design of research project

- Data collection process

- Interpretation of data

- Use made (or not) of research findings

From: May (2011, p. 51)

Faculty of Humanities Guidelines for Research

- Responsibility to the Research Profession

- Responsibility to the Participants

- Responsibility to the Public

- Relationship with Funding Agencies

Guidelines are available on ERGO and in the PGR Sharepoint folder:
https://sharepoint.soton.ac.uk/sites/humanities/gradschool/Research Ethics/

Faculty of Humanities Guidelines for Research

- Responsibility to the Participants

  – Informed consent

  – Confidentiality and anonymity

  – Protection from harm (physical, emotional, reputational)

  – Data storage

  – Debriefing

- Additional considerations when working with children or vulnerable people

Further information on university policies:
http://www.southampton.ac.uk/ris/policies/

Small group discussion: Ethical scenarios

Each member of the group should choose one scenario they would like to discuss from the lists on the handout (front and back). If any member of the group does not wish to discuss that topic, please choose a different one. Aim for 5 minutes discussion on each scenario.

- What are the ethical issues involved?

- How do they relate (or not) to the Faculty of Humanities guidelines?

- How would you approach the topic/situation ethically?

Faculty of Humanities ethical approval

- Read *Faculty of Humanities Ethical Guidelines for Research*

- **All researchers** must submit an Ethics Checklist form

- Research with physical or digital materials (texts, artworks, archives) will be approved by supervisor

- Research with human participants must be approved through ERGO (www.ergo.soton.ac.uk)

- You must not start your research with human participants until ethical approval has been obtained

Guidelines and checklist are available on ERGO and in the PGR Sharepoint folder: https://sharepoint.soton.ac.uk/sites/humanities/gradschool/Research Ethics/

Making your ERGO application

- Log in to www.ergo.soton.ac.uk

- Complete IRGA form online

- Submit Faculty documents:

  - Research protocol

  - Questionnaire or interview questions

  - Risk assessment

  - Participant information sheet

  - Consent form

Making your ERGO application

- Application categorized as A, B or C (depending on risks associated with project)

- Application submitted to supervisor

- Supervisor approves or requests revision

- Member of ethics committee reviews application and approves or requests revision (approx. 2 weeks)

- Category A project will be sent to the Research Governance Office for review

Using ERGO

- www.ergo.soton.ac.uk

Individual reflection

- Take 10 minutes to make notes of any areas in your research where you will need to take ethical considerations into account. You may wish to consider:

  - the process of research design

  - data collection

  - interpretation and publication of results.

- Discuss in your small groups and report any issues or questions to the larger group.

Further resources

- ERGO documentation: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/isolutions/computing/training/user_documentation/ergo/

- BlackBoard site: Research Skills for Postgraduate Researchers/Training materials/Research governance

  – Epigeum resources Ethics 1 and Ethics 2

  – Interactive resource: The importance of ethics in research

- University Research & Innovation Services policies: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/ris/policies/

- Humanities Research Support Officer: Bridget Trezise, B.Trezise@soton.ac.uk

Further reading

- May, T. (2011) *Social research : issues, methods and process.* Maidenhead, England : McGraw Hill.

- The Research Ethics Guidebook: http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/