Policy Title:	Ethics in Research Policy
Description:	This policy addresses ethical approval of research that is conducted in Marino Institute of Education by staff and/or students.
Author (Position):	Marino Ethics in Research Committee Chairperson
Version:	2.1
Approved By:	MIE Governing Body
Policy Approval Date:	June 2023
Date of Next Policy Review:	June 2027 (or as necessary)

Ethics in Research Policy

1 Context

1.1 Marino Institute of Education ('The Institute', 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:

  i. A commitment to the well-being, protection and safety of participants;

  ii. A duty to respect the rights and wishes of participants;

  iii. An evaluation of the relative benefits of any research to groups and individuals;

  iv. Supporting researchers in conducting rigorous, academic research;

  v. 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.

1.2 The Institute requires all research activity involving people as participants to be subjected to ethical scrutiny by the Marino Ethics in Research Committee (MERC) to assess any research proposed by members of staff or students, or external researchers where the research has not been subject to ethical scrutiny by another ethics board.

1.3 Ethical approval for research activity is assessed based on three levels:

  i. Level 0 – meta-analysis of extant data or research that does not involve human (or animal) participants, their material or data;

  ii. Level 1 – research carrying little or no risks or discomfort greater than usually encountered during normal daily life;

  iii. Level 2 – moderate to high-risk research, i.e. risk or discomfort is greater than usually encountered during normal daily life. This level includes all research involving children (i.e. under persons under 18 years of age) and vulnerable adults.

2 Purpose

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

  i. Minimising risk of harm;

  ii. Protecting the rights of participants;

iii. Informed consent and freedom to withdraw from involvement in research at any time;

iv. Avoidance of disclosure of non-processed or identifiable data;

v. Data storage, access, retention and destruction;

vi. Awareness and recognition of power relations in asymmetrical educational relationships.

2.2 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:

i. Child protection principles;

ii. Legal obligations and policy commitments in relation to children and members of vulnerable groups[1];

iii. An inclusive approach to research;

3 Benefits

The Ethics in Research Policy is designed to ensure compliance with best international practice and to promote the highest standards of research integrity while respecting and promoting the rights of participants.

4 Principles

The Ethical principles of the Belmont Report and those espoused in the Helsinki Declaration underpin this Ethics in Research Policy. These principles are:

4.1 Respect for Persons

People should be treated as autonomous agents who may participate voluntarily in a research project and that where people have diminished autonomy, they should be protected.

4.2 Beneficence

Research should be undertaken such that benefits of any proposed research are maximised and risks are minimised.

4.3 Justice

People should be treated fairly in terms of receiving the benefits and burdens of research and the basis of such fairness should be identified explicitly in terms of equal share, individual need, individual effort, societal contribution and according to merit.

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[1] See Child Safeguarding Statement, Safeguarding Policy: Children and Safeguarding Policy: Vulnerable Persons

4.4 Environment

Appropriate caution must be exercised in the conduct of research which may affect the environment, and the welfare of animals used for research must be respected.

4.5 Research with children and vulnerable persons

When a participant/subject deemed legally incompetent, such as a minor child, is able to give assent to decisions about participation in research, the investigator must obtain that assent in addition to the consent of the legally authorised representative.

5 Definitions

Anonymity:	Identifying information (e.g. names, job title, age, gender, workplace, length of service, location etc.) will be removed from contributors' – people, groups or organisations - data to the greatest extent possible.
Assent:	A child's or vulnerable adult's affirmative agreement to participate in research
Confidentiality:	The "treatment of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure without permission" (U.S. OHRP, 1993, Chapter III).
Informed consent:	Subjects have the capacity and ability to understand the implications of a decision to take part in research and actively and explicitly agree to such participation.

6 Policy

In order to support researchers in conducting the highest level of ethical research, the Institute has appointed a committee with responsibility for this area, the MERC. The membership of the MERC is drawn from across the staff at MIE, to represent undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and an external member(s).

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 MERC[2]. 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 that case, research should be conducted – accessing participants, presenting or

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[2] See Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals

publishing – using the affiliation of the institute that granted consent. In order to conduct research using a MIE affiliation, an application must be submitted to and approved by MERC.

A researcher who wishes to conduct research with or among MIE students must contact in the first instance the relevant Course Leader to express their intention and to see if such data collection could be permitted. In deciding on this, the Course Leader will consider factors such as the students' workload at the time and if other requests for supplying data have been received. The Course Leader can only grant permission for such a request if MERC approval has been received for the research[3].

In the case of student research projects at all levels (undergraduate and postgraduate) it is the responsibility of the student to complete an Application for Ethical Approval of Research[4] (MES students) or a Student Ethics in Research Committee (SERC) Application Form[5] (all undergraduate, PME and PDEFE students), in consultation with their supervisor or other nominated person approved by MERC[6]. Following review by the supervisor or other nominated person approved by MERC, the proposal may be approved, approved with conditions, declined or referred to MERC. In the case of low-risk projects, the Course Leader and/or relevant Head of Department has the authority to sign-off that all ethical requirements are being met in the design and conduct of the project, or they 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. Researchers will have their applications considered at the meeting following the submission of the application, provided the required notice is given, and the outcome (including relevant feedback) will be communicated to applicants in a timely manner.

At the end of each year, an annual report will be prepared of projects approved with the name of the student and their research topic. Anonymised data on proposals that were declined will also be included in the annual report.

If a student intends to publish research (e.g. in a journal paper or at a conference presentation), the possibility of this should be indicated to the research participants when the initial approach seeking consent is made. This should be discussed with the research supervisor as appropriate.

7 Responsibility

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[3] See Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals
[4] Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals
[5] Student Ethics in Research Committee Application Form
[4] Appropriate and adequate continued professional development would need to be provided for this person in relation to ethics in research.

The implementation of this policy is overseen by the Chairperson of MERC.

8 Related Documents

8.1 Procedure for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals

8.2 Application for Ethical Approval of Research Proposals

8.3 SERC Application Form

8.4 Good Research Practice Policy

8.5 Policy on Managing Research Grants and Contracts

8.6 Lone Researcher Guidelines

8.7 Guidelines on GDPR for Research Purposes

8.8 Child Safeguarding Statement

8.9 Safeguarding Policy: Children

8.10 Safeguarding Policy: Vulnerable Persons

8.11 Continuing Professional Development