

2(b): Queen Mary Policy on Research with Human Participants

2(b).1 Scope

All research involving human participants (including personal data or human tissue) using Queen Mary premises or facilities or conducted at external sites but led by Queen Mary staff, requires ethical approval before it commences. Queen Mary University of London regards a failure to meet this responsibility as a serious matter, which may constitute research misconduct.

Research is defined as ‘the attempt to derive generalisable or transferable new knowledge to answer questions with scientifically sound methods including studies that aim to generate hypotheses as well as studies that aim to test them, in addition to simply descriptive studies.’ (Source: HRA).

2(b).2 Exemptions

The Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee (QMERC) is responsible, under authority delegated by Senate, for approving the ethical standards of research involving human participants or materials derived from human participants. All such projects throughout Queen Mary should be submitted to the Committee for approval, except those research studies which fall within the remit of the NHS Research Ethics Committee, or other such recognised bodies.

2(b).3 External ethics review approval

QMERC may accept ethical approvals granted by external ethics review bodies when certain criteria are met. Reliance solely on external ethical approval must be explicitly authorised by QMERC.

2(b).4 Ethical principles underpinning the ethical conduct of research

This policy aims to ensure that Queen Mary research is conducted with honesty, integrity, and due care for the rights of participants and researchers.

Researchers must abide by the following principles:

- Participants must be treated with care, dignity, and compassion at all times;
- The design of research should provide benefits that outweigh potential risk or harm. Risks to those involved in the research must be minimised. Participants should be warned about any potential risks of harm;
- Research should not be intrusive nor otherwise compromise the integrity of the participants or those related to them, or their physical or emotional environment;
- Any incentives offered should not be such as to influence a potential participant to do anything which would be contrary to their best interests;
- Full informed consent should normally be obtained from participants to enable participants to take part voluntarily unless it would be unreasonable to do so or there is a justifiable scientific reason for deception. Informed consent should cover the research aims, research methodology and risks, and the approach to data

management and the handling of the research data or findings. Consent should be given freely without force or coercion;

- Confidentiality must be safeguarded at all times: if the research requires that responses will not be confidential the participant's agreement to this must be specifically and explicitly recorded;
- Research data should be managed in compliance with the relevant Queen Mary Data Management Policies, Queen Mary Research Data Access and Management Policy and the GDPR;
- Proposed use of the research material must be clearly stated, including possible publication and the form such publication might take;
- The research must conform to all relevant regulatory or organisational requirements in the country and institution within which the research is undertaken.
- Any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest relating to research must be recognised and declared. Researchers should seek advice and/or take steps to resolve them. Reference should be made to the Queen Mary Standards of Business Conduct Policy as applicable;
- Research with children and young people:
 - (i) Research with children and young people under the age of 18, and those who may not be able to give informed consent, should only be carried out with the explicit consent of a parent or guardian and with the consent or assent of a child / young person unless there are exceptional circumstances which must be approved by the QMERC;
 - (ii) Research with children or any vulnerable groups must be conducted with the guidance and supervision of expert intermediaries and should be conducted in line with relevant external safe-guarding policies.

For research undertaken by students, the Supervisor is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the above responsibilities are met.

2(b).5 Process and Procedure

The Senate has granted authority to the QMERC to establish criteria, independent processes, and procedures that are proportionate to the potential risks to enact this policy and to grant approval to research according to its terms. More information about the QMERC approval routes can be found on the [JRM0 research ethics webpage](#) or by contacting the Research Ethics Facilitators (research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk).

2(B).6 Review of the Policy

The QMERC is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy regularly to ensure it takes into account current guidelines and relevant legislation.

2(b).7 Oversight and Reporting

The present policy is subject to oversight by the QMERC, which reports to the Senate of Queen Mary University of London and routinely submits minutes of its meetings.

Contact: For further advice please contact: research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk

This policy applies only to Queen Mary.