



UNDERSTANDING ETHICS PROCEDURES

Guidance on Low Risk Research for UG and PG Students

Undergraduate and Taught Post Graduate (UG/PG) research approved at a programme level should be low risk. In exceptional circumstances, medium risk research can be approved after consultation with the National Design Academy Course Director. The National Design Academy will not approve students to undertake high risk research.

Research Study Topic

Low risk studies for UG/PG should NOT involve sensitive topics such as sexual behaviour, illegal behaviour, experience of violence, abuse or exploitation, mental health, gender or ethnic status, or illness.

Interaction with Human Participants

UG/PG studies involving living adults who are 18 years and over without physical, cognitive or mental disability/issues, without pregnancy or breastfeeding, who can give a consent to the researcher by themselves are classed as low risk.

Low risk studies for UG/PG should NOT involve:

- Potentially vulnerable groups of people such as children, young people under 18 years old, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers or people with a learning disability or cognitive impairment
- Participants who lack capacity physically, cognitively, and mentally
- Studies where permission of a gatekeeper is required (e.g. gatekeepers such as adult professionals working with children or the elderly)
- Deceased persons, body parts or other human tissues including bodily fluids

Involvement of Animals

Low risk UG/PG research must apply the principles of protecting and upholding high standards of animal welfare at all times and therefore should avoid or replace any involvement of animals.

Low risk studies for UG/PG should NOT involve:

- The involvement of animals for the purpose of teaching, testing, exhibition or performance
- The involvement of animals for biomedical or behavioural research
- Causing pain, suffering or distress to animals
- Breaking animal welfare legislation

Research Activity

Low risk UG/PG studies should involve straightforward, controlled procedures happening in the UK that are normally experienced in everyday life without causing any damage/harm to the researcher, participants and/or environment

Low risk studies for UG/PG should NOT involve:

- Inducing any psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation
- Causing more than minimal pain
- Intrusive interventions such as administration of substances, vigorous physical exercise, or hypnosis
- Causing any health and safety issues for the researcher by, for example, international travel
- Causing any environmental damage or harm
- Deception
- Research happening outside of the UK
- Community-based participatory research (commonly led and undertaken by members of community groups/organisations themselves working alongside or in partnership with professional researchers)

Research Data

Low risk UG/PG studies should involve anonymised or pseudonymised data (non-sensitive and non-confidential information) on the research topic that do not identify both participants and non-participants that are used for the study only, without further data sharing (data deletion by the end of the project)

Low risk studies for UG/PG should NOT involve:

- Capturing visual or vocal data from which participants can be identified
- Utilising personal data, personal quotes, or personal visual images found on the internet (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)
- Access to records of personal or sensitive confidential information such as genetic or other biological information
- Any data sharing of confidential information beyond the initial consent given
- Administrative/secure data from which participants can be identified

Suggested Research Methods for Low Risk UG/PG Studies

Could involve

- Anonymous online questionnaire (no demographic questions on personal information from which respondents can be identified)
- Non-participant observation (taking photos of the place, products, etc. without people)
- Interviews/focus groups/workshops with the fellow students within the programme without involving external participants (taking notes only without audio/video recording)
- User testing with the fellow students within the programme without involving external participants (taking photos of the place/product/etc. and interaction between place/product and people without showing people's faces or identifiable body parts)