

**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Research Ethics Policy and Guidance**

# SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all students enrolled on Common Awards programmes delivered by the Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership (YTEP) from September 2021. It specifically applies to all students who are undertaking **research involving human participants**.

There is much activity carried out by students, especially in placements and contexts, which does not count as research for the purposes of this policy, for example asking people to fill in sermon feedback forms, or writing a reflection on a pastoral visit. Nevertheless these activities may still have ethical implications, and these are dealt with in **Section A**.

**Sections B** and **C** deal with students who wish to engage in **research involving human participants** through the use of **questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or formal observations of non-public activity (eg. a PCC)**. Separate advice and permission must be sought for any research activity involving human participants not covered under these headings.

YTEP is committed to treating all human beings with respect, and expects the highest standards of integrity in those who are its students. The wellbeing of participants in research and placement work must be at the forefront of the researchers’ concern and any risk must be minimised.

# REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be reviewed by the TEI every three years or earlier if a serious concern is raised in the Common Awards Management Committee.

# SECTION A: PLACEMENTS AND EXPERIENCE-BASED REFLECTIONS

Placement or other experience-based reflections does not automaticallycount as research for the purposes of this policy. Although the student may use encounters with others for their assignments, the emphasis of these forms of assessment is on self-reflection and integrating that with critical theological enquiry. The sources for reflection will primarily include journals, personal stories, evaluation by others of a specific activity with which the student was recently involved, and similar sources, rather than people’s personal details of individuals in the host context. They are also less likely to involve what are clearly research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or formal observation of individuals. For the sake of clarity, a student who reflects on an informal personal conversation does not necessarily require ethical approval. However, a student who initiates the conversation for the sole purpose of gathering data for an assignment must seek ethical approval in advance. This policy therefore distinguishes between informal and formal conversations where the former does not require ethical approval and the latter does (see also informed consent below).

When evidence gathering does include such methods, or if there are other reasons to judge that a formal research project is being undertaken, the guidance in Section B and the ethics approval process in Section C must be followed before the activity takes place. Any failure to do this, or to follow the requirements of this policy, is likely to lead to the evidence being unusable and/or disciplinary action being taken (see the YTEP **Common Awards Research Ethics Misconduct Policy** – Appendix E).

Many of the Common Awards modules have an element of placement or experience based learning included within them and as part of the assessment strategy. The context within which such reflections take place will vary and may include the student’s home church or ministry context, an experiential visit to a particular setting or a longer term placement in a different context. For some students their whole programme will take the form of contextual learning, based either in their home or a placement setting. The terminology used for these experiences may vary from Centre to Centre within YTEP or from module to module, however, the principle outlined above that ‘YTEP is committed to treating all human beings with respect, and expects the highest standards of integrity in those who are its students’ applies equally to all these situations. Students and experience-based learning hosts will be made aware of this policy and will be advised to seek clarification from the Centre Head or Module Leader, if any aspect of the guidance is unclear.

# Safeguarding

* Though most students will have already obtained DBS Disclosure, it is the responsibility of the student’s ‘home’ context or the receiving placement organisation to assure themselves that necessary DBS or other safeguarding and Health & Safety checks are in place. Students are expected to follow the safeguarding policies and procedures of the host organisation. No student should be sent on placement in a different setting to their ‘home’ context until they have completed the first level of safeguarding training (normally online).
* In order to engage in pastoral work theological students must be under supervision and need to be assessed. Such supervision and assessment is carried out through conversation and through written work. Subject to safeguarding guidelines, any personal details discussed in supervision are confidential to the supervision process; personal details recorded in written work are also confidential to the assessment process.

# Informed Consent

* Where a student is reflecting on their observations of a public group activity, such as a church service, no specific consent is required. Consent from the PCC or incumbent is required if the activity is private eg. a PCC meeting.
* Feedback forms which allow members of a placement church congregation to evaluate student activity should make clear the way these will subsequently be used.
* For any informal conversation (see above) consent is not required as long as exact quotations are not used, and the individual involved is not identified either by role or by name. If a student wishes to report on an informal conversation and the individual involved is identified (eg. my incumbent said…) then verbal consent must be obtained from that individual. When doing so, students should include a statement at the beginning of their submitted work stating that consent has been obtained. For example:

*‘Verbal consent has been obtained from all individuals whose opinions or observations are cited in this work and who are identified’*

Where a formal conversation has taken place (eg. an interview) a full ethical approval process, including written consent must be obtained. The use of audio and / or video recording always requires formal ethical approval.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity**

* A variety of assessment strategies in Common Awards programmes require the student to reflect on context as a relevant aspect of ministerial practice.  When submitting work for assessment students are expected to exercise a high degree of discretion and sensitivity and to communicate their reflections with a spirit of generosity to the host context.  Where possible and appropriate details of groups and locations should be anonymised, and personal details of any individual should be omitted, both in written work and in evidence provided as appendices to assignments.
* Students who subsequently wish to make available their writing or reflections to a wider audience should seek the written permission of those whose stories or view they wish to share. Supervisors or examiners who wish to cite students’ work in any context should seek the permission of the student and ascertain that, if any personal stories are retold, the appropriate written permissions have been obtained.
* Where a student is uncertain about where and when to seek consent or maintain confidentiality or anonymity they should speak to their Module Leader BEFORE submitting assessed work and / or BEFORE conducting any research.

# Data Protection

* + Information held on computer or in hard copy form relating to an identifiable subject falls within the scope of the Data Protection Act 2018. It is the responsibility of the student to work within the Data Protection policies and procedures of YTEP.

# SECTION B: RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Ethics approval must be sought for any research involving human participants before such research takes place. Any failure to do this, to conduct such research in line with what has been approved, or to follow the requirements of this policy, is likely to lead to the evidence being unusable and/or disciplinary action being taken (see the Common Awards Research Ethics Misconduct Policy – Appendix E). If there is any doubt about whether Ethics approval is necessary, students should seek the guidance of the Research Ethics lead at their centre.

Projects can change direction such that ethical issues arise that were not present when the project was proposed and initially reviewed. For example, a student is carrying out a text-based project, not related to human participants, but realizes part way through their project that they need to integrate some interviews into their work. Should the direction of a research project change such that *either* (a) ethical considerations become relevant to a project that did not previously require ethical approval *or* (b) the parameters of a research project change so as to raise fresh ethical considerations, approval (or additional approval) must be sought before continuing with the research.

# Safeguarding

* Where research includes the participation of children or vulnerable adults, researchers must have received an enhanced disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is a key requirement. Normally, students who are preparing for recognised ministry will have obtained such disclosure at the beginning of their programme. Other students will need to undergo checking before commencing research.
* Interviews with children, young people under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults, whether individually or in a group must never be conducted by the interviewer alone. A responsible adult such as a parent, carer or teacher must be present. It is the responsibility of students to ascertain and adhere to the safeguarding guidelines of the church or other context in which research is conducted. Any commitment to confidentiality made to participants does not obviate the need to follow safeguarding guidelines.

# Informed Consent

* All participants in research must give their informed consent to participate. Where specific individuals are invited consent should be in writing. Participants must have been informed, in writing, of the nature of the research and their participation in it, of any risks, and of the intended use for any information they give. In this way their consent will be informed, valid, and freely given. The extent of the readership of the final project should also make clear: whether it will be read only by examiners, available to library users, or be published more widely.
* In addition, permission for the proposed research must also be sought from any institution, school or church where the research takes place.
* Where participants are recruited from clients of a particular service-provider, whether public or private, written permission must be sought from that provider, eg. NHS, Social Services, etc.
* Where participants under the age of 16 are involved in any research, informed consent must be obtained in writing from their parents or legal guardians. Participants who are 16 or 17 can provide their own written consent. However, any interviews must be conducted in the presence of an appropriate adult.
* Specific consent must be obtained where interviews or observations are going to be audio or video recorded.
* The right for a participant to withdraw from the research, and withdraw their consent at any time during the phase of the research in which the student is gathering data must be made clear and the mechanism to do so communicated to the participant.

# Confidentiality and Anonymity

* The confidentiality of participants must be respected, particularly with respect to any personal information obtained from them. Participants must be informed, in writing, of how this will be secured.
* Normally, information used in final forms of assessment must be anonymised, along with the details of other identifying information (the names of local churches or projects, etc). Descriptions of the location of research should be general rather than specific (e.g. referring to ‘a church in an industrial district of a large urban city, with a very high proportion of racial and religious diversity’ rather than ‘St Peter’s, Moss Side’).
* Remember that people may be easily identifiable from their role or details of context. If such factors mean that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, this must be made clear at the point at which consent is obtained.
* Only where express permission has been given by an individual in writing to the use of personally identifiable information being used may it be so.
* If it seems necessary to include in the supporting documentation something such as a church newsletter that will identify the place where the research was undertaken and it is not possible to remove or obscure such details, permission must be obtained from a recognised authoritative body, eg PCC or incumbent, and from anyone whose character, opinions, etc., feature in the assignment and who can be identified by means of the material in the supporting documentation.
* Assessors of submitted work are bound by the same expectations of confidentiality.
* The submission of work for assessment is distinct from work that will be published. The former has a confidential system of assessment, the latter has a wider public audience. If there is the possibility of publication, participants must be made aware of this in advance of the research beginning and this possibility must form an explicit part of the consent obtained. If publication becomes a possibility after consents have been obtained, new written consent must be gained.

# Data Protection

* All research must be carried out within the bounds of the Data Protection Act 2018. This includes requirements for secure data storage and destruction of data. It is the responsibility of the student to inform themselves of these parameters, and to work within the Data Protection policies and procedures of the Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership.
* Informed consent must be obtained from participants when any personal data is to be held about them. Informed consent means that participants must be clear about what data will be stored, why, how, and for how long.

# The Conduct of Interviews

* + Act politely and courteously at all times.
	+ Explain to the interviewee(s) the nature and purpose of your project.
	+ Explain how the interview is to be used.
	+ Obtain permission for the interview to be recorded, if this will be necessary.
	+ Clearly set out the scope of confidentiality within the interview.
	+ Make it clear that the participant can terminate the interview at any time.
	+ Obtain any consents in writing.

# SECTION C: ETHICS APPROVAL PROCESS FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

**Stage 1**: Proposals for dissertations, extended projects, independent learning projects (ILPs) and placement-based modules are pre-screened by the relevant module tutors within Centres. If potential harm to participants is identified, ethics approval is sought using the YTEP Ethics Approval Form (Appendix C). This form requires an outline of the nature and purpose of the research and the completion of a checklist that identifies ethical issues and subsequent comment to assess the risk involved. This form must be submitted along with the relevant Independent Learning Project Proposal form, Learning Project form, Extended Project form or Dissertation Proposal Form in use for the programme. Along with the form, any of the following that are relevant to the research must be submitted for approval:

* + A participant information sheet that clearly explains the study such that they are in a position to give informed consent (see guidelines in Appendix A).
	+ A consent form for use by participants which specifically includes permission to record any interview or observations if relevant, and details the opportunity to withdraw (see example in Appendix B).
	+ Any questionnaires that will be used.
	+ In the case of a structured, or semi-structured interview, an account of the questions and/or areas that are to be discussed.

**Stage 2**: Completed ethics approval forms (with supporting documents) are screened by Centre Officers, who are empowered to decide whether proposals can be approved as they stand or need further scrutiny. Approval at Centre level will be given where the Officer is satisfied that all potential harm to human participants has been identified and all appropriate mitigations put in place. The Officer will refer the case to the YTEP Research Ethics Panel if he/she feels that, despite proposed mitigations, the degree of risk of harm is such that fuller scrutiny would be beneficial, for example where:

* work involves minors and/or vulnerable adults, who are unable to give ‘informed consent’;
* anonymity may not be completely secure;
* results are intended for publication;
* the adequacy of proposed mitigations is arguable;
* the research project addresses particularly controversial issues.

**Stage 3**: Proposals that require further scrutiny are reviewed by the Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership Research Ethics Panel (normally a subset of the Student Affairs Sub-committee specifically convened for this purpose). The Panel may require alterations to the documentation or to the research design itself and in these cases all documents must be resubmitted.

**NB**: No data collection should begin until the researcher has received written approval from either their Centre Officer or the YTEP Research Ethics Panel Chair.

For further details of this process see Appendix D.

Where high risk proposals are made (for example dealing with vulnerable groups and/or addressing sensitive issues) YTEP will ensure that it draws on appropriate expertise to make the decision, which may need to be from beyond the TEI. The University Liaison Officer for YTEP, External Quality Adviser and/or External Examiner may be asked to advise either on the proposal or on where such expertise may be found.

# Research Ethics Panel

The YTEP Research Ethics Panel reports to the YTEP Common Awards Management Committee. It is responsible for reviewing and approving research activity involving human participants, and ensuring that YTEP follows best practice.

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| --- |
| ***Note****This Ethics policy refers throughout to placements. YTEP Centres have a range of placement policies which work in line with this Ethics policy.* |

May 2025

**Appendix A**



**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Research Participant Information Sheet Guidelines**

Potential participants in your research should be given sufficient information to allow them to decide whether or not they wish to take part. The information you give should be written in clear, non-technical language that is easy to understand. You should include the following information:

1. **Study title**

Give the title of your study. If it contains technical terms or is not self-explanatory to a lay person, you should include a brief explanation.

1. **Invite participation**

A brief paragraph inviting the person to take part. For example:

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. In order to help you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. You may wish to discuss it with others. For any further information or questions about my research, please contact me on: XXXX*

1. **Provide brief information on the aims and purpose of the project**
2. **Explain why the person has been chosen and who else will take part**
3. **Informed consent**

The potential participant should be told that participation is entirely voluntary. For example:

*You are free to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do wish to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. It is usually not practical to withdraw after the research project has been written up. If you take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be given a copy of it to keep.*

1. **Information about what the research will involve**

Clear description of what the participant will be asked to do, giving an idea of how much time it will take. You should give information about your research method, eg interview or focus group.

1. **Information about any risks or benefits for the participant**

Risks – for example if your interview addresses potentially painful personal issues which may affect the participant’s well-being, you should alert them to this possibility, and provide information about who they should contact for support if this happens.

Benefits – for example your research might provide an opportunity to contribute to our understanding of some issue. Do not exaggerate the benefits if none are obvious.

1. **Confidentiality**

You should provide information about the limits of confidentiality and the security of information. Provide specific details of how confidentiality will be maintained and who is likely to have access to personal information and data; eg supervisors, internal and external examiners. Do not provide promises of absolute confidentiality as a few staff may have limited access to data in order to mark the project, but state that every effort will be made to provide as much confidentiality as possible. Under normal circumstances no-one else should have access to the participant’s details or data. Confidentiality includes the fact of the person’s participation as well as their data. Only in exceptional circumstances might personal details or raw data need to be examined by staff or examiners.

1. **Data**

Provide information about what will happen to the information you collect and any participant details; how and where it will be presented, who is likely to read it and whether surveys or interviews will be destroyed after the assessment has been marked. Inform the participant of the extent to which they may or may not be identifiable. If data is to be retained after the end of the project, you must give clear information about how and why this will happen.

1. **Further information**

Provide the contact details for yourself and your TEI supervisor for the potential participant to contact if they require further information and would like to take part. Refer the potential participant to the YTEP Research Ethics Policy and tell them where this can be viewed.

Thank the potential participant for considering taking part.

Participants must be given a copy of the information sheet and a copy of the signed, dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the student.

May 2025

**Appendix B**



**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Research Ethics Consent Form**

**Participant identification code:** ......................................

**Title of project:** ..............................................................................................

..............................................................................................

**Student’s name:** …………………………………………...................................

**Student’s contact details:** …………………………………………...................................

(For use if the participant wishes to withdraw consent)

**Supervisor’s name:** ……………………………………...........................................

***Please read and sign below:***

*(Additional information should be included as appropriate, eg ‘I agree to the interview being audio recorded.’)*

* I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet about the above-named project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
* I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time prior to the research project being written up, without giving a reason.
* I agree to take part in this project.

Participant’s name: ……………………………………………

Signature: …………………………………………… Date: ……………………………

Student’s name: ……………………………………………

Signature: …………………………………………… Date: ……………………………

***Participants will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the student.***

**Appendix C**



**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Ethics Approval Form**

## Section A

### Student information

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** |  |
| **Banner ID no.** |  |
| **Tel. no.** |  |
| **Email** |  |
| **Centre** |  |
| **Module code and name** |  |
| **Assignment title** |  |

## Section B

### Initial declaration

This investigation will include research involving children or young people under 16. No / Yes

This investigation will include research involving young people aged 16-18. No / Yes

This investigation will include research involving adults No / Yes

This investigation will include research involving vulnerable adults No / Yes

***NB: This form covers research involving human participants through the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or observations of activity. Separate advice and permission must be sought for any research activity not covered under these headings.***

*All students must complete all sections of this form. You should include with your application a copy of your proposed Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet. Completed applications should be submitted to the nominated member of staff in your YTEP Centre.*

## Section C

*Please answer all the following questions.*

***Where No/Yes is requested, give details if answering Yes (or, if necessary, to explain No)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. What are the aims of this study/project?
 |  |
| 1. How will the study be carried out?(e.g. interviews, questionnaires, observation)

*Please include copies of any questionnaires with your application.* |  |
| 1. How many participants will be recruited, and by what criteria will they be selected?
 |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **SAFEGUARDING** |
| 1. Does the study involve participants who are under 18 or particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?
 | No / Yes |
| 1. Have any safeguarding issues have you identified? If yes, provide details of the arrangements you will make to ensure safeguarding good practice.
 | No / Yes |
| 1. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics not usually addressed in your placement work?
 | No / Yes |
| 1. Could the study induce psychological stress, anxiety, or cause harm or negative consequences to the participants beyond the risks encountered in normal life?
 | No / Yes |
| 1. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants?
 | No / Yes |
| 1. What other particular ethical issues do you foresee?
 |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **INFORMED CONSENT** |
| 1. Will you ensure informed consent from individual participants?

*Please include a copy of your information sheet and consent form with your application.* | No / Yes |
| 1. Do you need to seek permission from any institution or service-providers?
 | No / Yes |
| 1. Will any interviews be audio or video recorded?
 | No / Yes  |

|  |
| --- |
| **CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY** |
| 1. How will confidentiality of individual participants be maintained?
 |  |
| 1. How will the confidentiality of the placement or context be maintained?
 |  |
| 1. Who will have access to the data gathered?
 |  |
| 1. Who will have access to the final piece of work?
 |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **DATA PROTECTION** |
| 1. How will data be collected?(e.g. recording, written notes)
 |  |
| 1. How, and for how long, will the data be stored?
 |  |
| 1. **I confirm that data for this project will be handled in accord with the YTEP Data Protection Policy and IT Acceptable Use Policy.**

 Signature of student & date: |  |

## Section D

### Supervisor(s)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Placement Supervisor** (where applicable) |  |
| Name |  |
| Address |  |
| Tel |  |
| Email |  |
| **I have read this form and support the student in their proposed study.**Signature & date: |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Module Supervisor** |  |
| Name |  |
| Address |  |
| Tel |  |
| Email |  |
| **I have read this form and support the student in their proposed study.**Signature & date: |  |

## Section E

|  |
| --- |
| **I agree to conduct this study in line with the ethical guidelines laid down in the YTEP Research Ethics Policy and Guidance.**Signature of student:Date: |

## Section F

***Ethical approval has been granted / rejected.***

COMMENTS:

CONDITIONS (if any):

Signed: Date:

Name:

Role in YTEP:

**Appendix D**

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**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Research Ethics Approval Process**

***Stage 1: Centre-level Pre-screening***

***Stage 2:******Initial Research Ethics Screening by Centre Officers***

* Centre Officer scrutinises YTEP Ethics Approval Form.
* Centre Officers are empowered to decide whether the proposal can be approved or needs further scrutiny. (Criteria for this decision are set out in the YTEP Research Ethics Policy.)

***Stage 3: Consideration by YTEP Research Ethics Panel***

The Research Ethics Panel of YTEP may choose to:

* Approve the proposal;
* Approve the proposal with certain conditions and/or recommendations to be monitored by the Centre Officer;
* Require resubmission of the proposal, giving guidance as to desired changes and/or mitigations;
* Reject the proposal; or
* Refer the proposal for further consideration in consultation with a specialist advisor.

***Stage 4: Consideration by YTEP Research Ethics Panel in consultation with specialist external advisor***

After consulting a specialist advisor, the Research Ethics Panel of YTEP will make one of the following decisions:

* Proposal approved;
* Proposal approved with certain conditions to be monitored by the Centre Officer; or
* Proposal rejected.

Centre Officers will keep a record of all Ethics Approval Forms considered and decisions made, for annual review and discussion of learning points by the Student Affairs Sub-committee, and for reporting to the YTEP Common Awards Management Committee.

July 2025

**Appendix E**



**Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership**

**Common Awards Research Ethics Misconduct Policy**

**INTRODUCTION**

This policy sets out the procedure to be followed in a case where a suspicion arises that a student has not followed the YTEP Research Ethics Policy when pursuing an academic assignment for a Common Awards module.

The YTEP Research Ethics Policy sets out the kinds of approval and informed consent required for different kinds of work. In particular, it sets out different expectations for formal research involving human participants and for placement- or experience-based reflections. The rules below should be read in the light of the Research Ethics Policy. They are not intended to impose extra constraints on students but to explain how YTEP will handle breaches of existing constraints.

While YTEP’s Student Affairs Committee (SASC), constituted as YTEP’s Research Ethics Panel, is responsible for ethical approvals for research activity, it is the YTEP Board of Examiners that considers academic consequences of breaching the Research Ethics Policy.

This policy and the YTEP’s Research Ethics policy are themselves governed by Durham University’s [Research Integrity Policy and Code of Good Practice](https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/policy/integrity/).

**SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy covers the following forms of misconduct:

* failure to obtain appropriate informed consent, to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, or to observe data protection regulations as set out in section A of the YTEP Research Ethics Policy;

and

* failure to follow the ethical approval process for research involving human participants set out in those policies, or failure to observe the limits of the approval granted through that process.

It covers such misconduct in the context of formative or summative assessments, whether in the form of placement- and experience-based reflections, or independent learning projects and/or dissertations that include research with human participants.

It covers the academic consequences of such misconduct – that is the impact on the student’s marks and academic progression. It does not cover the disciplinary consequences that might be appropriate in serious cases.

It does not cover safeguarding. If any safeguarding concerns arise in consideration of possible cases of research ethics, those will be handled immediately by invoking YTEP’s and its Centres’ safeguarding procedures.

**CATEGORIES OF OFFENCE**

There are two categories of offence: ‘minor infringements’ and ‘more significant offences’.

When *all* of the following conditions are met, a student is deemed to have committed a **minor infringement**:

1. either the work involved was not formal research involving human subjects, as defined in the YTEP Research Ethics Policy or, if it was, ethical approval was sought in advance;
2. in the judgment of the Chair of the YTEP Board of Examiners
	1. no harm to any of the people involved has been caused or made possible;
	2. there would be no reasonable cause for offence or upset should the existence and nature of the breach become known by the persons or in the location named;
	3. there is no reason to suspect that the subjects of the student’s research were misled about the nature of their engagement with the student, and the student’s intentions in relation to that engagement;
3. no safeguarding issues are raised (ie. the failures do not relate to children or vulnerable adults); and
4. it is possible for the offence to be rectified by the student.

All other infringements will be considered as **more significant offences**.

In many cases the relevant marker, moderator and external examiner will be the only potential audience for the work in question. That fact by itself does not make an offence a minor infringement. If, for instance, sensitive personal information has been revealed even to that limited audience, this counts as a ‘more significant offence’.

**PROCESS**

This process shall be followed whether the potential misconduct is noticed before or after work is submitted for assessment.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | If a marker, moderator, or external examiner suspects that a student has breached the policy, or is informed by others of such a potential breach, she or he (the ‘reporting examiner’) shall communicate this to the Chair of the TEI’s Board of Examiners (BoE) immediately.If the potential breach is noticed before the work is marked, the work shall not be marked until the process set out here has been followed.If the potential breach is noticed after marking has taken place but before the mark has been returned to the student, the process set out here shall be followed before the mark is returned.If the potential breach is noticed after the mark has been returned, the process set our here shall still be followed, even though it could lead to that mark being withdrawn. |
| 2 | The YTEP BoE Chair should determine whether there is *prima facie* evidence of misconduct, and whether (in line with the definitions offered above) it would constitute a minor infringement or a more significant offence.If the Chair judges that the case raises any questions in relation to **safeguarding** or **fitness to practice** policies, where they apply, or to **discipline**, they shall trigger the appropriate YTEP and Centre procedures. |
| 3a | In the case of a suspected **minor infringement**, the student shall be asked to rectify the error – for example, by amending the piece of work so as to ensure that it is appropriately anonymised and resubmitting it. Where rectification involves resubmission, the student shall be instructed not to make any changes to the work other than those needed to rectify the breach, and the infringing version shall be kept on file long enough to allow that to be checked. Once the rectified version has been received and checked, however, the infringing version of the work shall be deleted.The YTEP BoE Chair may require that the student receives advice or undergoes training to help them understand the problem and what is needed to rectify it, and to help prevent future instances.In such cases no marking penalty shall be imposed. |
| 3b | Where there is *prima facie* evidence that a **more significant offence** may have taken place, a panel constituting the Student Affairs Sub-Committee of YTEP’s Board of Examiners (comprising the BoE Chair and two other members of the Board appointed by the Chair), shall consider the case. Wherever possible, the panel shall not include any reporting examiner, or anybody closely involved with the work in question (such as a dissertation- or project-supervisor). YTEP shall give careful consideration to the diversity of the panel’s membership, including by ensuring wherever possible that the panellists are not all of one gender. |
| 4  | The student(s) concerned shall be invited to meet the panel together with the reporting examiner(s). The student shall normally receive at least five working days’ notice of the meeting and shall be told of its purpose. They shall be offered the opportunity to be accompanied at the panel meeting by a member of staff from their Centre or another part of YTEP (eg. their personal tutor or equivalent). The student may also be accompanied by a non-staff member for the purpose of providing support to the student, at the discretion of the panel Chair.The purpose of the panel meeting is twofold: 1. to ascertain, as far as possible, the facts of the case – eg. what approval was sought and whether, when, and how informed consent was obtained;
2. to determine one of the outcomes set out below.

The first of these will normally take place with the student present and the second once the student has left. |
| 5  | In the case of final year students where the reported breach is brought to light at the end of the student’s programme it is permissible to hold a panel meeting without five days’ notice, provided that the student concerned agrees in writing to this. This course of action may be necessary in order to give the YTEP Board of Examiners the opportunity to consider the case without causing any delay to the normal process of considering the student for their award. |

**Deciding factors**

At the end of the meeting the panel – excluding the reporting examiner(s) – must decide, on the balance of probabilities, whether any infringement of the Research Ethics Policy has taken place and, if so, how serious it has been. It shall take into account

1. the extensiveness of the breach;
2. the sensitivity of the information involved;
3. the account given by the student, including any mitigation offered.

Based on this decision, the panel must determine the appropriate action to be taken.

**Possible outcomes**

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| 1  | **No further action** shall be taken since1. no offence has taken place, or
2. whilst there is clear evidence of an offence, due to exceptional mitigating factors a penalty is deemed inappropriate.
 |
| 2 | Due to clear evidence of an offence, one of the following penalties is applied:a. **The student is required to rectify the offence**, by amending the assignment in question and/or by seeking missing permissions, but no further penalty is imposed. (This will only be appropriate where the sensitivity of the breach is very low, and where it is a first offence, or a first-year student; or the student’s mitigation is accepted).b. **A mark of 0 is awarded for the work**, the student is required to rectify the offence, and s/he is permitted to resit/resubmit the piece of work with the mark capped at the assignment pass mark (within the resit limitations set out in the Core Regulations for the Common Awards programmes). This may be appropriate where the offence is more extensive or more sensitive, or where it is a repeat offence. c. **A mark of 0 is awarded for the entire module** in which the offence occurred, and the student is required to rectify the offence and to resit the entire module, with the overall module mark capped at the pass mark (within the resit limitations set out in the Core Regulations for the Common Awards programmes). In the case of students at Level 6 of the BA programme, at which level resits are not permitted, this will result in the student failing their programme. This is the most severe penalty open to YTEP’s Board of Examiners and should be used only in the most serious cases. |
| 3 | **The case is referred to Durham University** as a possible major offence, where the level of academic misconduct goes beyond the examples cited in section 2 above and, therefore, it needs to be dealt with under the University’s student discipline regulations. In this case, the panel shall choose a provisional academic penalty from section 2 and shall contact the Common Awards Team as soon as possible for advice on progressing the case under the University’s student discipline regulations.(Such cases may include, but are not limited to, actions which have put participants at risk of harm, seriously infringed their personal data privacy and/or caused reputational damage to their Centre, to YTEP or to the University). |
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If the panel judges that the case raises any questions in relation to **safeguarding** or **fitness to practice** policies, where they apply, or to **discipline**, they shall trigger the appropriate YTEP and Centre procedures.

**After the panel meeting**

A record shall be made of the meeting and written up immediately afterwards. This report shall specify the nature of the offence committed, the student’s explanation, and the Panel’s decision, and shall be sent electronically to the Common Awards Team at Durham University as soon as possible. The Common Awards Team shall forward the report to the relevant University Liaison Officer for review and will use the report to monitor practice within and across the Common Awards TEIs.

Where the panel determines one of the outcomes in sections 1 and 2 above, the written report shall be presented to YTEP’s Board of Examiners for consideration. The Board shall consult YTEP’s external examiner before making a decision about cases involving work submitted for final honours.

The outcomes of the panel meeting and of the consideration of the case by the YTEP Board of Examiners shall also be communicated to the student in writing by the Chair of YTEP’s Board of Examiners.

In all cases in which the student is not in the final level of their programme of study or has other summative assessments still to complete, a member of the teaching staff of their Centre must have a meeting with them, preferably in person, to counsel them on how to avoid infringing the Research Ethics Policy in future. A record of this meeting shall be kept in the student’s file.

**Appeals**

A student may request a formal review of any academic decision affecting them, including a decision made under this policy, by following the Common Awards academic appeal process. See the Common Awards [*Complaints and Appeals*](https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/students/complaints-appeals/#d.en.401986) webpage for more information.

**INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

YTEP and its Centres shall seek ensure that all students know what is required and what is acceptable in academic work that involves research with human subjects or that draws on experience in ministry contexts. All students shall be made aware of the importance of safeguarding, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and data protection (see section B of the Research Ethics Policy and Guidance.).

July 2025