

## Research Ethics Policy

### General Overview

The Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) is committed to treating all human beings with respect and expects the highest standards of integrity in those engaged in research activities who are students of the Federation. Where people are involved in research and placement work their wellbeing must be at the forefront of the researchers' concerns and any risk must be minimised.

### Policy Selection

The Cambridge Theological Federation is an ecumenical partnership of several institutions that collaborate to deliver academic programmes validated by three different universities: Cambridge, Durham, and Anglia-Ruskin. Each university operates its own Research Ethics Policy. **It follows that a student is required to adhere to the Research Ethics Policy stipulated by the validating university responsible for the programme a student is registered on.** The guidance that follows below pertains only to the programmes delivered under the auspices of the Cambridge Theological Federation. For a full list of programmes see: <https://www.theofed.cam.ac.uk/>.

### University of Cambridge Policy:

**Bachelor of Theology (BTh), Diploma in Theology for Ministry (DTM), MPhil, MLitt and PhD** students must abide by the Faculty of Divinity's Guidance on Research Integrity and Ethics. The relevant guidelines can be found here: <https://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/about-us/research-integrity>.

### Anglia Ruskin University Policy:

**Master of Arts (MA), Professional Doctorate (DProf), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** Students must abide by Anglia Ruskin's Guidance on Research Integrity and Ethics. The relevant guidelines can be found here:

<https://myaru.sharepoint.com/sites/student-learning-assessment/SitePages/research-ethics-and-integrity.aspx>.

### Research Ethics Panel

The Research Ethics Panel (REPa) has oversight of the content, implementation, and periodic review of the CTF Common Awards Research Ethics Policy (REP). The REPa is accountable to the Durham Awards Oversight Group (DAOG). The REPa is responsible for the review and approval of ethical applications pertaining to Common Awards (Durham) programmes only (See *v. Ethics approval process* below). The Panel may consist of up to five members and the minimum quorum is two. DAOG appoints CTF Academic Staff to the Research Ethics Panel. The term of service is three years. The Panel will meet three times per academic year to transact business. The REPa will choose a moderator that acts as the main point of communication with CTF (DAOG) and University Liaison Officer (Common Awards).

## **University of Durham (Common Awards) Policy:**

**Foundation Award in Theology, Ministry and Mission, Certificate of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission (Cert TMM), Diploma of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission (Dip TMM), Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Ministry and Mission (BA TMM), Graduate Diploma in Theology, Ministry and Mission (GD TMM), Master of Arts in Theology, Ministry, and Mission (MA TMM), Postgraduate Certificate in Theology, Ministry and Mission (PG Cert. TMM), and Postgraduate Diploma in Theology, Ministry and Mission (PG Dip. TMM).**

### *i. Scope of the policy*

This policy applies to all students enrolled from September 2022 on programmes at all levels within the suite of awards validated by the University of Durham titled Theology, Ministry and Mission and delivered by the Cambridge Theological Federation. It specifically applies to all students who are undertaking independent learning modules and/or dissertations which entails research involving human participants.

Students for awards with validating Universities other than Durham, including PhD students with Cambridge University or PhD and DProf students with Anglia Ruskin University, are not covered by this policy, and must abide by the policies of the University with which they are registered.

The policy only covers students who wish to engage in **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. Students should note that it is very unlikely that permission will be granted for forms of research that involve active intervention by the researcher into a situation being investigated.

### *ii. Key Ethical Considerations:*

#### *Safeguarding*

- Where research includes the participation of children, young people or vulnerable adults/adults at risk, students must have received an enhanced disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service. **This stipulation is a key requirement.** Students must obtain such disclosure at the beginning of their programme if they are a recognised candidate for ministry.
- Interviews conducted with children, young people under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults/adults at risk must never be conducted by the student alone, whether individually or in a group. A responsible adult such as a parent, carer or teacher must be present.
- If a safeguarding disclosure is made by a research participant to a student during the research process, then the student must adhere to the safeguarding policy of their particular House. However, if the student is researching within their own placement context or other organisation and a disclosure is made, then the student must follow the safeguarding policy of that organisation. The student must familiarise themselves with the policy before data collection starts.

#### *Informed Consent*

- All participants in research must give their informed consent to participate in writing. This action requires that they 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. You should also make clear

the extent of the readership of the final project: will this be read simply by examiners, or might you want to publish it on the web or in some other form?

- Where participants under the age of 16 are involved in research, informed consent must be obtained in writing from their parents or legal guardians.
- Specific consent must be obtained where interviews or observations are going to be recorded.
- The right for a participant to withdraw from the research and withdraw their consent at any time during the process must be absolute and the mechanism to do so must be 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.
- Information used in final forms of assessment must be anonymised, along with the details of other identifying information (the names of Local Churches or organisations, etc). Details should be given only in outline ('a suburban church in a mid-sized town', not 'a church in Cherry Hinton, Cambridge').
- Remember that the church is a small place: people are 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 parish bulletin that will identify the place where the research was undertaken, permission must be obtained from the officials of the place, and from anyone whose character and opinions feature in the essay, 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.
- Informed consent must be obtained by 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, how, and for how long.

### *The Conduct of Interviews*

- Researchers are expected to be polite and courteous 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.
- The scope of confidentiality must be clearly set out within the interview.
- It must be clear that the participant can terminate the interview at any time.
- Any consents should be obtained in writing.

### *iv. Placements and Experience-Based Reflections*

All of the above considerations apply to submissions for placement work or other experience-based reflections. In addition:

- It is the responsibility of the receiving placement institution to organise and confirm that necessary DBS or other safeguarding and Health & Safety checks are in place. This is named in the Working Agreement with placement institutions.
- In order to engage in pastoral work, theological students must be under supervision (i.e., line-managed by the minister/leader in charge in a church attachment/placement or equivalent in a social context placement) and need to be assessed (i.e., through a relevant Common Awards theological reflection module). Such supervision & assessment is carried out through conversation and through written work. 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.
- Although the student may use encounters with others for their reflection, the emphasis of these pieces of summative assessment is on self-reflection and integrating that with critical theological enquiry. Thus, the sources for reflection will primarily include journals, personal stories and similar sources rather than others' personal details.
- The work remains the intellectual property of the student who has written it and will not be shared by the supervisor or examiners with others, except those bound by the confidentiality of the assessment process.
- Placement submissions in University of Durham Common Awards programmes require the student to reflect on context as a relevant aspect of ministerial practice. This does not remove the expectation of anonymising persons and locations that appear in experience-based reflections. Discretion and sensitivity need to be exercised in including general details in order to contextualise the work rather than naming the location (e.g., referring to 'a church in an industrial district of a large urban city, with very high proportion of racial and religious diversity' versus 'The Church of St John the Evangelist, Cheetham Hill').
- When referring to evidence of the nature of the context, students are expected to exercise discretion and sensitivity. For example, parish demographics developed by the Church of England statistics department can be referred to, but it is expected that students render their citations general, referring to the page and publication year, but not the specific parish.
- If it seems necessary to include in the supporting documentation something such as a parish bulletin that will identify the place where the research was undertaken, permission must be obtained from the officials of the place, and from anyone whose character, opinions, etc., feature in the essay, and who can be identified by means of the material in the supporting documentation.

- 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.
- Students who subsequently wish to make available their writing or reflections to a wider audience should seek the written permission of those whose stories they wish to tell – even if names have been altered – in order to preserve confidentiality and confidence. At this point the formal ethics approval process must be employed.
- Ridley Hall and Westcott House ordinands will complete a Ridley/Westcott attachment/placement form to enable the use of experience from such practicums in theological reflections as part of in-house formation and/or modules on Common Awards academic pathways. Ordinands from other member institutions of the CTF and all Independent Students in the CTF (whichever institution they belong to) may complete a Student Ethics Checklist Form to permit the use of experience on attachment/placement for the purpose of theological reflection. Forms are to be returned to the designated person (tutor or administrator) in each institution. Each CTF member institution is responsible for making sure its students comply with the requirement to complete the relevant form.

#### *v. Ethics approval process*

Ethical approval must be sought for any research involving human participants. If you are in doubt about whether ethics approval is necessary, seek the guidance of your Director of Studies or Tutor in Practical Theology (or equivalent) or tutor responsible for attachments/placements.

Ethics approval is sought using the Ethics Approval Form (posted on Hedwig, the CTF VLE). 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 Module Proposal form or Dissertation Proposal Form in use for your 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.
- A consent form for use by participants which will also specifically include permission to record any interview or observations, if relevant, and detail the opportunity to withdraw.
- 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.

Ethics approval forms are reviewed by the **Research Ethics Panel (REPa)**. The Panel may require alterations to the documentation or to the research design itself and in these cases all documents must be resubmitted. **No data collection should begin until the researcher has received written approval from the REPa (communicated within Turnitin)**. The University Liaison Officer (Common Awards) will advise students when decisions are ready to view.

Ethical Applications are submitted online via Turnitin on designated deadlines determined by the Research Ethics Panel in consultation with the University Liaison Officer (Common Awards). Ethical applications are first and second read by members of the Research Ethics Panel. Ethical applications are designated either Approved or Resubmit. The first reader notifies the University Liaison Officer (Common Awards) of the outcomes of review of ethical applications. The University Liaison Officer (Common Awards) notifies students when decisions are available to view on Turnitin. Those required to resubmit must do so within 14 days. When the Panel returns an application to the

student in order to require alterations to the proposal, the alterations may be confirmed by one member of the Panel. The Panel member reviewing resubmitted applications will notify the University Liaison Officer (Common Awards) of outcomes, who then notifies students when decisions are available to view on Turnitin.

Where the panel cannot come to agreement or require additional expertise to make a decision, submissions will be referred to the **Cambridge Theological Federation Durham Awards Oversight Group (DAOG)** for advice.

*vii. Research Ethics Misconduct*

In the event of research ethics misconduct in a Common Awards programme, the Cambridge Theological Federation follows the Common Awards policy on the academic consequences of research ethics misconduct. See:

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/assessment/other-research-ethics/>

*viii. Review of this Policy*

This policy (pertaining to Common Awards) will be reviewed every three years from September 2022, or earlier if a serious concern is raised. Any serious concerns should be referred to the Research Ethics Panel acting on behalf of DAOG. Any changes deemed necessary will, in turn, be referred to DAOG for decision and approval.