

## Imperial College Research Ethics Committee (ICREC) and Science, Engineering and Technology Research Ethics Committee (SETREC)

Version	Date	Reason for Change
Version 1.0	21 August 2025	1 <sup>st</sup> Edition

### Ethical Framework Guidance

Being 'ethical' means acting in accordance with a set of core values and principles, in particular, integrity, compliance with the law, respect for human rights and avoiding unnecessary risk to people's safety and well-being. Imperial College London seeks to ensure that any potential ethical risks arising from research are limited strictly in proportion to the importance of the intended benefits.

The basic principles of ethical research which are to be considered in an ethical review are:

- **Autonomy:** The participant must normally be as aware as possible of what the research is for and be free to take part in it without coercion or penalty for not taking part, and also free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without a threat of any adverse effect.
- **Beneficence:** The research must be worthwhile in itself and have beneficial effects that outweigh any risks; it follows that the methodology must be sound so that best results will be yielded. This includes review of methods (e.g. genetic research, interviews, questionnaires, randomised controlled trial) or subject matter (e.g. recreational and controlled drugs, human impact on the environment) that are sensitive and therefore need to be managed consistently.
- **Non-maleficence:** Any possible harm must be avoided or at least mitigated by robust precautions. Protecting the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants, in addition to considering the safety of the researcher(s). Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.
- **Confidentiality:** The research must not compromise the privacy of individuals whose data is involved in the work. Personal data must remain unknown to all but the

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research team (unless the participant agrees otherwise or in cases where there is an overriding public interest, or where participants wish their voices to be heard and identified).

- Integrity: The researcher must be open about any actual or potential conflicts of interest and conduct their research in a way that meets recognised standards of research integrity. This also includes considering the legitimate interests of other stakeholders.

The REC need not reconsider the quality of the science, as this is the responsibility of the principal investigator. The REC will be satisfied with credible assurances that the research takes account of appropriate scientific peer review.

It is also important that the ethics committee makes informed recommendations to the researcher if the proposal is found to be wanting in some respect.