



Going to School Research Ethics Policy

1) Purpose

The principle governing **Going to School** research involving human participants and personal data is respect for the participants' dignity, rights, safety, and well-being. This policy helps us operationalize this principle as we conduct our research.

2) Applicability

1. This policy applies to you if you are a full-time, part-time employee, part time (project based) employee, consultant, or intern at **Going to School**, conducting research on behalf of **Going to School**. Please follow this Policy in every research project undertaken by **Going to School**, either independently, or in collaboration with another organisation or researcher. In case a partner/collaborator is a university or organisation having its own ethics policy, **Going to School** research team shall adhere to both.
2. In every research project, the first responsibility for considering, respecting, and safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of human participants involved in research lies with the lead researcher (e.g. the principal investigator or supervisor) and also with the entire research team.
3. All members on a research team at **Going to School** are responsible to ensure that this Policy is followed, and are further responsible to disclose any failure to meet the principles of conduct required by the Policy.

3) Ethical Research Practice

1. Upholding ethical standards in the conduct of research means accepting and respecting principles of integrity, honesty, and openness. Conducting research with integrity means embracing intellectual honesty and accepting personal responsibility for one's own actions.
2. Prior to, during, and following the completion of research activities, researchers at **Going to School** are expected to consider the ethical implications of their research and, depending on its nature, the cultural, economic, psychological, physiological, political, religious, spiritual, and social consequences of it for the human participants involved.
3. Researchers should always consider their research from the perspective(s) of the participants and any other people who may possibly be affected by it.

4) Principles of Research Ethics

1. *Prevention of Harm and Promotion of Safety*

Safety and well-being are at the heart of research ethics. In case research work involves interacting with others, researchers must offer all reasonable protection to participants from harm during the process. Researchers also have a responsibility to consider their own safety and that of any co-researchers or collaborators.

In the context of research, harm can include the following:

- Actions causing **physical or sexual harm** to another, including but not limited to intentionally causing bodily harm, injury, or pain to participants; forceful and non-consensual medication; and sexual assault and exploitation



- Actions causing **psychological harm**, including but not limited to intentionally instilling fear, alarm, shame, or emotional distress, or intentionally exposing them to traumatic stimuli without prior content or assurance of safety
- Actions that may cause **socio-economic harm**, including but not limited to a participant's loss of livelihood, insurance, or benefits due to the researcher's failure to maintain confidentiality; putting people from marginalised communities at risk by disclosing personal information; and if applicable, failure to reimburse participants for expenses they may have incurred for the study
- Actions that adversely affect someone else's rights, property, or interests
- Actions that involve deception or non-consensual participation of participants
- Actions that are illegal, such as theft, fraud, or extortion

Researchers must actively take steps to avoid, prevent, or minimise harm to others as much as possible. Participants should not be subjected to unnecessary risks or unsafe situations as a part of the research process. If it is expected that harm, unusual discomfort or other negative consequences might occur in prospective participants' future lives as a result of participation in a research project, the researcher should highlight this and discuss the matter fully with participants before obtaining their informed consent.

***Please note** that some participants, such as children and adolescents, should be considered vulnerable to harm and risk by default because of their limited ability to provide consent to take part in a research project. Other groups may be considered vulnerable to harm or risk because of their social identities. Adequate safeguards and consent procedures must be designed and followed when recruiting vulnerable participants for the study. Researchers must engage in reflexive research practices, critically reflect on power dynamics and possibilities of harm or exploitation, and seek supervision in case they are working with people from vulnerable groups or marginalised communities.

2. ***Informed Consent***

Human subjects must be informed about certain aspects of the research project, before their consent is obtained. This information is usually contained in an informed consent letter that each respondent in your study needs to sign; by doing so, respondents indicate that they have read the letter and agree to participate in your research project. The purpose of obtaining informed consent safeguards participants from any mental or physical harm that might befall them as a result of their participation. Participants are made aware of any potential risks that come with participation and know that procedures are set in place to deal with any negative outcomes that might ensue.

When preparing information sheets and consent forms, the [following checklist](#) may be helpful:

1. Give participants a clear explanation of the aims, overall purpose, methods and implications of the research.
2. Explain that participation is voluntary.
3. Remind participants that they have a right to withdraw their consent at any time without any consequences.
4. Explain the degree of benefit, risks, burden or discomfort involved in participation.
5. Give an estimate of the time and effort expected of participants.



6. Explain precautions to ensure participants' safety and provide information on insurance, if there is any.
7. Explain who is funding the research and for what purpose.
8. Disclose who will benefit from the research.
9. Give a firm commitment to protecting respondents' anonymity and privacy (provided that this can genuinely be guaranteed).
10. Make a clear commitment to treating personal and sensitive information confidentially.
11. Reassure participants that there are secure procedures for analysing any data gathered.
12. Explain clearly who will have access to any data that participants provide.
13. Consider any unintended/unexpected/incidental findings and explain how you intend to deal with such findings.

3. **Deception**

Research involving deception, concealment, or covert observation is not considered ethical because voluntary and fully informed consent cannot be obtained. However, in the case that the validity of the study would be compromised if participants are provided with information regarding the objectives, procedures and methods of the research prior to taking part in the study, then activities that involve keeping certain information from participants or covert observations may be considered if:

1. The extent of such activities is specifically defined
2. The desired information cannot be acquired through alternative methods
3. The participants or any parties involved during the process do not experience increased harm or risk due to such activities
4. The disclosure to the participants is thorough and prompt, and a de-briefing is carried out with all participants to explain the methodology and rationale of research as well as clarify any queries, after participation is completed
5. The participants are given the option to later withdraw data which they provided without their knowledge or consent during the research process
6. Such activities do not have adversely impact the relationship between the researchers, the participants, and their communities
7. Consent from participants to the use of the data obtained by deception once the debriefing process is completed

It is important to note that where it is not possible or fitting to provide all information necessary for informed consent, it should be provided at an appropriate juncture once the participant has made the contribution to the study and that their consent is taken once again after the debriefing process before their results are considered.



4. **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to the obligation of an individual or organisation to safeguard entrusted information of participants that was obtained during the course of the study. This includes but is not limited to obligations to protect information from unauthorised access, misuse, disclosure, modification, loss, or theft. The findings from research should be communicated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the participants, unless otherwise agreed. Researchers are expected to protect the confidentiality of the participant's identity and data throughout the course of the research project.

Wherever possible, data should be collected and stored in anonymous form to ensure the safety and security of participants. In research studies, data is often anonymised by removing identifiers and reference to any identifying characteristics of participants. This may also require coded record numbers and measures to protect the key that would link the data to personal identifiers.

Prospective participants should be informed if there are any potential risks such that the confidentiality or anonymity of their data may not be guaranteed.

5. **Respecting Participants' Rights**

Participants rights, as a principle of research ethics, include but are not limited to:

1. Open and thorough disclosure of information about the nature of the research project, about how and why their data will be collected and used as part of a research project, and by whom;
2. Informed and voluntary consent to participate, withdraw from, or refuse to take part in research projects;
3. Non-disclosure of personal information or identifiable data without their consent
4. Assurance of security of their data such as data and samples collected should be kept secure and anonymised where appropriate
5. Safety such that participants should not be exposed to harm and unnecessary or disproportionate levels of risk
6. Erasure of their data if and when it is no longer required for research purposes

6. **Originality and Plagiarism**

Research ethics include the principle of transparency and originality. In all research projects, **Going to School** must accurately cite the source(s) that they have referred to while working on the project. Please ensure that all research projects are original, accurate, and well-referenced.

Please read more about our policy and guidelines regarding plagiarism in our Publications Policy [here](#).

7. **Disclosure and Conflict of Interest**

Upon publication, researchers must disclose any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript. All sources of financial support for the project should be disclosed.



5) Breach of this Policy

1. Researchers as well as subjects of a research study are encouraged to report any breach of this policy by writing to the Lead Researcher on the research project. In the event the complaint of breach is against the Lead Researcher, the complaint is to be made through the relevant policies. Please ensure that your written complaint has the following information:
 1. Name of the researcher who is alleged to have breached this policy.
 2. Nature and details of the breach:
 1. What is the breach that has occurred?
 2. Against whom did the violation occur?
 3. When did the breach occur?
 4. How did the breach occur?
 5. How did you gain knowledge of the breach?
 6. Details of any measures taken to address the breach (this is not an expectation).
 7. Any additional information: photos, videos, text messages, screenshots, and any other information that you think may be relevant.
 8. All complaints received under this policy will be dealt with keeping in mind the provisions of the relevant policies.

6) Declaration of Adherence

All research studies, reports, and activities conducted at **Going to School** are required to have a declaration stating that the provisions of this policy have been followed in entirety along with a disclosure of the steps taken in order to adhere to this policy. This declaration is to be signed off by the lead researcher along with the CEO.

7) Relationship with other policies

This policy is to be read and implemented in collaboration with other policies at **Going to School**.