



UK Council *for* Graduate Education

Design and Delivery of Training in Research Ethics

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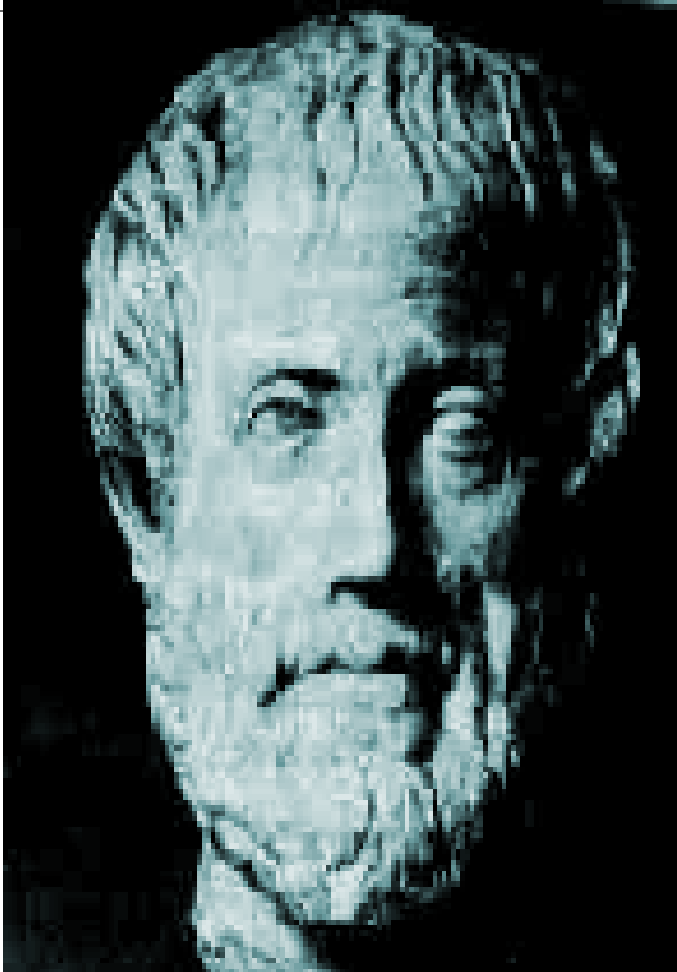


Design and Delivery of Training in Research Ethics

- ⌚ Research governance: Rationale and agenda
- ⌚ Designing training
- ⌚ Delivering training

Research...?

Governance...?



“Every art and **every enquiry** and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good;

And for this reason **the good** has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”

Aristotle
Nicomachean Ethics
Book 1, Chapter 1

350 BC

Research...?

Governance...?

every enquiry → research aims *at what?*

some good → *which* good?

a **plurality** of goods!

“For science...
For the good of society...
To make my living...
To discover new knowledge...
To change something...
For economic development...
To pursue personal interest...
... etc etc etc...”

Research Governance... a broad definition

mediates

between competing 'goods'

attempts to
formalise and structure
the plurality of 'goods' which claim our allegiance and
prioritization **with respect to the aims of research**

Complexity of governance agenda

! A plurality of goods...

Competing **policies** → national and international governance agendas
NHS, RCUK, ERA, FP7

Competing **problems** → academic, administrative, political, economic

Competing **priorities** → research outcomes, public protection,
accountability, socio-economic impact,
educational

Governance complexity

- ⓘ Research ethics involves **manoeuvring** between ethical, legal, and epistemic issues
- ⓘ Overlap between **ethical principles** (consent, autonomy) and **legislation** (Data Protection, Human Tissue, Mental Capacity)
- ⓘ **Judgements** about the appropriateness of research **methods to achieve aims**
- ⓘ Assessing possible **outcomes**, risks, benefits, and the **impact** on the public good

Rationale of research governance

- ‡ This complexity means that training in research governance and ethics must aid participants in **navigating conflicting priorities**
- ‡ Training must provide **a map** of the territory which is research governance and ethics
- ‡ Such a map will provide an adequate description of the field: its history, case studies, ethical theory, principles in context
- ‡ **Basis of training → the rationale of research governance**

Rationale = the *why* of research governance

- ⓘ The rationale of research governance is the key because the content of the field is in a state of flux and **constantly changing**
- ⓘ Training should encourage participants to aim to achieve **balance** between inherent tensions
- ⓘ Embedding training across HEIs means addressing the different aims of participants

Attitudes

- i Box-ticking exercise

- i Facilitating ethical approval
 - § Students in natural sciences, health, social sciences, arts?
 - § Staff in these fields?

- i REC members

- i Improving awareness → **developing research integrity**
 - § Embedding the ethical in the methodological and improving good research practice in general

Training and cultural change

- ❗ Good practice needs embedding into the culture of an organisation
- ❗ Training involves impact on upper-tiers of organisation as well as practical delivery 'bottom-up'
- ❗ Modularised delivery of training can encourage 'box-ticking' attitudes towards research ethics and integrity
- ❗ Such modularised approaches make proper embedding and cultural change difficult

Dissemination of training

- i Students? Staff? Committee members?
- i Monitoring and enforcement?
- i Availability and access to guidance and update briefings
- i Continual development of awareness
 - Avoidance of box-ticking attitude

Training design and delivery

i Formal training

- class-based
- online
- informational/sign-posting
- literature and documentation

i Informal training

- within existing supervisory relationship
- practical 'hands-on'
- **by example**

A situational & contextual approach

- ! Use of case material
- ! Examples and exercises
- ! Historical cases and hypothetical cases
- ! Context = Policy and Law; Research Impacts
- ! Ethical theory
 - Dangers of *overly* philosophical approach

Case Example: Milgram Experiment

Subjects believed they were part of an experiment dealing with the relationship between punishment and learning. An experimenter who used no direct coercion instructed participants to shock a learner by pressing a lever on a machine each time the learner made a mistake on a word-matching task. Each subsequent error led to an increase in the intensity of the shock in 15-volt increments, from 15 to 450 volts. In actuality, the shock box was a well-crafted prop and the learner an actor who did not actually get shocked. The result: A majority of the subjects continued to obey to the end—believing they were delivering 450 volt shocks—simply because the experimenter commanded them to. Subjects were told about the deception afterward.

Precedent:

Difficulties in consent for certain kinds of research aims

Role of deception, misinformation, disinformation

Example: Foundational Documents

Nuremberg Code (1947)

Principle Two

The experiment should be such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods or means of study, and not random and unnecessary in nature.

Principle Four

The experiment should be so conducted as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury

Principle Six

The degree of risk to be taken should never exceed that determined by the humanitarian importance of the problem to be solved by the experiment.

Principle Nine

During the course of the experiment the human subject should be at liberty to bring the experiment to an end...

Policy Examples: UK Frameworks

- NHS Research Governance Framework
- ESRC Research Ethics Framework
- BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Medical Research Council Code

Etc...

All based on **sets of principles** derived from those of Nuremberg and Helsinki documents

Example: Basic Principles

- Valid Consent
- Respect for autonomy
- Importance or necessity of research goals
- Risk proportionate to benefit
- Risk effectively managed
- Confidentiality of participants and data
- Conflicts of interest disclosed
- Transparency in publication of results

Example: Ethical Reasoning

principles	à	de-ontological ethics
results	à	consequentialism
practices	à	discourse/virtue ethics
situations	à	casuistry/situational ethics

Example: Themes in Research Ethics

! Consent

- validity, information, capacity, voluntariness

! Risk

- Potential harms, degrees of risk, kinds of risk, management

! Confidentiality

- Legal background, preservation, anonymity



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Questions?

Discussion...