

Course information Research Ethics

Research Master Students and PhD candidates

6, 13, 20, 27 March and 3 April 2018

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Lecturers:	dr. Anders Schinkel & Doret J. de Ruyter
Credits:	3 EC
Costs:	€375

The lectures are from 14.30 – 17.00 hrs.

The lecture room will be announced in due course.

Introduction

At various stages in conducting research you will be confronted with ethical quandaries. At the beginning of your research you will have to think about the problems you may face, which will be described in your research proposal. Many PhD students in the Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences need to get approval of the METC and many ask the VCWE for approval before they (can) begin with their research, for which they have to reflect on the way in which they involve human subjects, but also on how they can conduct a research with integrity. During the data collection there might be challenges about transparency, subjects who (threaten to) drop out, data storage. While analysing data, you're always confronted with outliers and it might be that you discover something interesting about a single item or one factor that has significance if reported about separately, but not within the large database. And what if one of your outcomes challenges the results of your supervisor, or if it has a negative outcome for the company who's paying for your research, the institute in which you're conducting your research, or the groups among which you conduct your research? Finally, in writing and publishing the paper, the question arises who should be on the list of authors. And of course, the question is: how many papers should one write per year? Can the pressure of the system be detrimental to the integrity of researchers?

Most students' research involves empirical research with human subjects. As this is highly challenging from an ethical perspective, we will pay attention to this more extensively. Legal regulations, ethical codes of research organizations, faculties or universities are important (and strict) guidelines that describe the duties of researchers and therefore are helpful in many cases. However, in all research projects there will be moments at which ethical principles conflict or at which it is a challenge to strictly conform to the rules of the ethical research codes. Particularly in research in which groups are involved or in longitudinal studies the informed consent of participants may pose a challenge or even threat to one's research. And what if you find information in neurological or genetic research that you were not looking for that is important but also devastating for the research subjects? In all such situations, ethical codes can guide, but not replace, ethical judgement.

Course objectives

- Students know the central ethical principles underlying responsible conduct of research, particularly when human subjects are involved
- Students know the legal rules as well as the ethical codes of the VSNU, their professional organizations and the Faculty
- Students are able to evaluate research (plans) by means of the ethical principles
- Students are able to detect and reflect on ethical dilemmas in empirical research
- Students are able to work relatively autonomously from their supervisor and are able to stand up for themselves in a respectful manner
- Students' disposition to follow the ethical principles in their own research has been strengthened
- Students' motivation to be responsible researchers and research with integrity has been strengthened

Type of Assessment

Type of Assessment(s): Paper

Grading: Excellent, Good, very satisfactory, sufficient, insufficient

Date to turn in the assignment: 17 April 2018, BEFORE 23.59 hrs