#	POLICY TITLE	POLICY AREA:	VERSION:	DATE: ADOPTED
ST.NICHOLAS MONTESSORI	**5.7 CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STUDENT RESEARCH**	5) TEACHING AND LEARNING	4.0	Oct 2020

Introduction and Context

Practitioner research contributes much to the knowledge base of education.

Evidence has shown that involvement in research increases teachers' commitment to developing their teaching and keeping up-to-date with new information.

Students engaging in research represent their college as well as their profession and as such are required to act with integrity and maintain the highest of professional standards when conducting research.

The **SNMCI Code of Good Practice in Research for Learners** sets out guidelines for research activities undertaken by students.

Scope

Student research activities within SNMCI and roles and responsibilities in the Supervision of Learner Dissertations and Research Projects

Purpose

The purpose of this code is to set out clear ethical guidelines for learners, in particular students of early years education and primary education, conducting research in SNMCI.

Links to other documents

This document should be read in conjunction with and is in addition to *QA 5.5 Research Policy; QA 5.7 Terms of submission of Student Research; QA 5.8 Ethics Committee and Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures; QA 5.9 Guidelines on Supervision in Research.*

Code of Good Practice

From beginning to end, student research projects have a number of distinct phases. Each of these phases has particular requirements in terms of assuring the quality of the overall process.

N.B:

- Students **ARE NOT** permitted to conduct research with children or young people under the age of 18 or with individuals or groups who

may be considered vulnerable.

- Students **ARE NOT** permitted to conduct research on what may be considered highly sensitive topics that may cause potential psychological or emotional harm and / or distress to research participants.
- In certain situations, students are permitted **TO OBSERVE** groups of children as part of research projects they may be carrying out within schools or public settings. In these cases, students should be guided by the specific recommendations of the Ethics Committee (EC).

Before commencing research

Choosing a topic and selecting a Research Design

- Students should consider whether their research topic is feasible and practical to explore, in terms of time, effort, access to participants etc.
- Students should also choose an area which they will enjoy researching.
- Each student should make sure that the methodology selected is appropriate to the question/s being addressed and is also within the student's capabilities.

Risk

Risk refers to potential harm (physical, psychological or social) that may arise from the research. International research guidelines advocate a 'minimal risk' standard, which implies that the anticipated probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort are **not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.**

- Students should be encouraged to conduct a risk assessment to determine the potential for risks to the organisation or the health, safety and well-being of the researchers and research participants.
- A key ethical consideration in research involving children (to any degree) is the level of risk to which children may be exposed.
- The College's Ethics Committee (EC) needs to evaluate the potential risk or discomfort posed for children (interpreting minimal risk in relation to the normal experiences of average healthy children) and ensure measures are in place to mitigate potential harm arising from the research process including suspension of the research project if a child's safety or wellbeing is negatively affected.

Ethical Issues

The role of the student /researcher in early childhood education is a complicated one. Student researchers often use research techniques such as action research or participant observation.

- When students research children for whom they are responsible there are complex ethical considerations to be considered. Issues such as what constitutes informed consent and voluntary participation for child participants, relationships, confidentiality and privacy require in-depth consideration.
- Students, and where appropriate SNMCI, should make best efforts to anticipate any outcomes of a research project which might be harmful, or which could be misused for purposes that are illegal or unethical.
- Students are required to submit their proposed research projects to the Ethics Committee for approval **prior** to beginning any data collection (QA 5.7/5.8)

Informed Consent and Assent

- All research participants must provide written consent indicating their willingness to participate in the research **prior** to the collection of data. For consent to be valid it has to be informed, and the onus is on the researcher to show that he or she has taken the steps necessary to ensure that the person whose consent is being sought has been adequately informed about the research.
- Students must ensure that all research participants understand the research process including their role in the research, how the data will be used and how and to whom findings will be reported.
- In the case of student research involving action research or participant observation in classroom settings, informed consent is required from parents or guardians for any observations of children (defined in Ireland as persons below the age of 18) in private or closed settings.
- Students may conduct observational research in public spaces where children may sometimes be present. Although informed consent is not practical in such cases, students conducting observations in public spaces need to ensure that they adhere strictly to ethical considerations of privacy and confidentiality and that no harm comes to any individuals as a result of research observations.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Students are required to uphold the right of research participants to confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process. This includes an obligation to ensure that data generated through the research process is kept secure and the identity of participants is not revealed at any stage.

- Students must acknowledge the right of any participant at any stage to withdraw from the research and must inform all participants of

that right.

- Only the minimum amount of personal data required should be sought and retained
- Personal data may NOT be used for any other purpose other than that specified at the point of collection and cannot be retained once the initial purpose has ceased.
- Access to research data by others (colleagues/tutors/college) is contingent on prior consent being obtained from the participants.

See document QA 5.5 section/Documenting Results and Storing Data

Child Protection and Well-being

In the case of SNMCI, where much research is conducted in the area of childhood studies, it is vital that researchers carry out their work in accordance with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA, 2011).

- Students should follow the guidelines set down in the *SNMCI Child Protection Policy* and know the name of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or member of staff responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- All concerns relating to child protection should be communicated immediately to the DLP and research supervisor.
- *Children First* requires that concerns about children be reported to the Children and Family Services of the HSE, which has statutory responsibility to protect children, or in an emergency directly to the Gardaí.

Staff Involved: Supervisors; DQAA; Chair and members of Ethics Committee; Research Academics

Procedure	Person/s Responsible	Records generated to ensure evidence of follow through
When conducting research: **Supervision** Students undertaking either a dissertation or a project will normally be assigned a supervisor. Ongoing practice suggests that the key elements which lead to a productive student / supervisor relationship include: - Clarity of responsibilities	**PD's Supervisors Learners**	**Records of meetings**

- Consistency of supervision practices and procedures - Record keeping of all supervisory input/support by both faculty members and learners **Supervisor's Responsibility** The primary function of the Supervisor is to provide guidance and support to the learner and to act as a critical and rational sounding board for ideas. The Supervisor should ensure effective liaison between him/herself, the student and the College. S/he should keep a written log of formal contact with the learner. - **The following recommendations are not exhaustive. Supervisory responsibilities will inherently change in the light of the nature of the project or dissertation.** **The Supervisor will:** - Assist the student in clarifying the project or dissertation topic and its aims and objectives - Assist the student in the identification of and sourcing of appropriate information, literature and other relevant material / sources (primary and secondary) - Offer advice on appropriate structures and approaches - Offer advice on a suitable methodology - Offer advice on acceptable referencing styles - Assist the student in managing the timetable for the project or dissertation - Monitor the student's progress - Assist the student in identifying problems or difficulties with the project or dissertation - Ensure the student is made aware of inadequate progress - Participate in assessment procedures and practices as specified by the Programme Committee - The supervisor will normally read and comment on drafts or sections of the project or dissertation and return such work within a reasonable timeframe **Student's Responsibility** The primary responsibility for the management of the dissertation or project lies with the student	**Supervisor**	**Supervisors log** **Research Handbook Guidelines**

The Student will: - Agree and effectively manage the communication mechanism with his/her supervisor - Agree a schedule of formal meetings with his/her supervisor and ensure that these are kept - Communicate any changes to the agreed and approved research design and resubmit to the REC in consultation with his/her supervisor - Follow best practice in the collection, storage and management of data. See QA 5.5 - Submit drafts or sections of the project or dissertation to his/her supervisor as advised. Submit the completed work in the required format and in the timeframe directed by the College.	**Learner**	**Supervisor's log and signed agreements**
When finishing research: **Students should consider the following before submitting their final draft:** - Have I conducted my research without any element of subterfuge or deception and in accordance with the standards and guidelines laid down by SNMCI and other relevant regulatory and professional bodies? - Will the research and findings be reported accurately and honestly? - Have the independence, autonomy and integrity of participants been respected at all times? - Will the research (dissertation or project) be submitted in the format outlined in the assessment brief (font, chapter headings, referencing, hard copy soft copy etc.)? - Will the research (dissertation or project) be submitted within the agreed timeframe? - Will research data be retained in a secure and accessible form and for the required duration? (See QA 5.5)	**Learner**	

Policy Control Sheet

Policy	QA 5.7 Code of Good Practice for Student Research
Version	4.0
Adopted/Effective	Oct 2020
Supersedes	2.0
Monitoring/ Next Review Date	Every Two Years /Jan 2021
Responsible Officer(s) Designated Reviewer(s)	DQAA; Chair of Ethics Committee; PD's; Research academics
Scope	

References

SNMCI Policy area	5) Teaching and Learning: QA Vol 2
Developed with reference to	UKRIO Checklist (Research Integrity Office); Teaching Council of Ireland Research Strategy, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
Related SNMCI Policies / Forms	QA 5.6 Research Policy QA 5.8 Terms of Reference for Submission of Student Research Proposals QA 5.9 TOR and Operating Procedures Ethics Committee

Revision

Revision Number	Revision Description	Originator	Approved By
3	General Review for Blended Learning	Office of DQAA	AB