Ethics Regulations

Ethics Committee for Pedagogical Sciences and Education Science (Pedon)

April 2012 (revised December 2018)
Preface

In the behavioral and social sciences, people play a major role in research. They are the subjects of research, and they regularly participate in its execution. In the fields of educational theory, special needs education, and the educational sciences, minors and/or their parents/guardians are particularly likely to be involved in research. Research in which children are involved requires very careful consideration and assessment of whether the necessary ethical requirements have been met.

The general principles of proper scientific education and research are established in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (VSNU, KNAW, NWO, etc. 2018). These principles apply to all scientific and educational activities of Dutch universities, and they are endorsed by the National Ethics Council for Social and Behavioural Sciences (NETHICS, see nethics.nl).

In addition, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016) came into force in the European Union in 2018. This was accompanied by the repeal of the Netherlands Personal Data Protection Act. The provisions of the GDPR include the manner in which personal data should be handled in scientific research and education. The provisions that apply to scientific research differ from those that apply to the general use of such data.

The ethical guarantees established in the Medical Research (Human Subjects) Act apply within the context of medical research in the Netherlands. Much of the research involving participants that is conducted within the social and behavioral sciences does not fall under the definition of medical research applied in this Act, however, and it is therefore not assessed by medical ethics committees under the supervision of the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO). For this reason, the Deans of Social Sciences in the Netherlands declared the ‘Code of Ethics for Research in the Social and Behavioural Sciences Involving Human Participants’ binding in 2016. This code was revised in May 2018.

Research in the fields of education and special education is expected to include formal ethical assessment. For this reason, the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences at the University of Groningen established an Ethics Committee for Pedagogical Sciences and Education Science (‘EC Pedok’) in 2012. This committee assesses whether research projects within the department that involve participants meet the applicable ethical guidelines, which are specified in the Pedok Ethics Regulations. All researchers within the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences are expected to apply these guidelines. This committee acts in close cooperation with the other four ethics committees in the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences.

Research conducted within the department that falls under the category of medical research must be approved by the UMCG Medical Ethical Committee (METC). In case of doubt, the EC Pedok can be consulted.
1 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. The research is to be set up and conducted in accordance with Dutch legislation and regulations.
2. The registration of personal data is to be accomplished in accordance with European legislation and regulations.
3. The research is to be set up and conducted in accordance with the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
4. The research is to be set up and conducted in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Research in the Social and Behavioural Sciences Involving Human Participants. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that ethically responsible working methods are followed in research conducted by other parties under their supervision or responsibility.
5. In the preparation of research, the acceptability of the research is to be assessed in light of applicable ethical principles. The Ethics Committee must always be consulted in case of doubt concerning the ethical acceptability of the research.
6. Researchers and their assistants are to carry out only those tasks for which they have been appropriately trained and prepared.
7. For research conducted outside the researcher’s workplace, the researcher is to ensure that consent has been obtained from the host institution or other relevant organizations before the research is conducted. In this regard, the research must meet the requirements applying within both the Faculty and the host institution.
8. Researchers are to take measures to ensure that the rights and well-being of participants and other people involved in the research are not violated.
9. For research involving participants with specific problems, the researchers are to familiarize themselves with these problems before conducting the research. To this end, they are to consult with experts in the field of these problems.

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1 See the list of sources for an overview of the relevant legislation and regulations. The relevant laws, codes and regulations are listed on the Ethics Committee webpage.
2 See the list of sources for an overview of the relevant documents.
3 These ethical principles are elaborated in Section 2.
2 APPLICATION OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 Personal data

Personal data: Any piece of information concerning an identified or identifiable natural person.

1. In research involving participants, the researcher often receives access to personal data. Researchers must treat personal data in an appropriate manner and adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016.

2. The privacy of the participant must be respected, and personal data must be treated as confidential. Personal data that could lead to the identification of the participant are to be stored separately from the research data.

3. Researchers are to use personal data only for the objectives for which they have been collected, as formulated in advance by the researcher, or for objectives that are compatible with these objectives.

4. Researchers must not transfer any personal data to third parties without the prior consent of the participant and/or the participant’s legal representative. The transfer of personal data to third parties may take place only for purposes of scientific research and only with the written consent of the actual participant.

5. Researchers must take appropriate technical and organizational measures (e.g., protection using passwords) to guard against loss of data or wrongful access or processing.

2.2 Participant recruitment and informed consent

1. Prior to conducting the research, researchers are to inform participants and/or their legal representatives about what they can expect during the research. If possible, this information is to be provided to the participant in writing, in the form of an information letter or leaflet. The information letter or leaflet must conform to the guidelines of the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (Manual for the review of medical research involving human subjects, 2002). Participants are to be informed about the objective and methods of the research in comprehensible language. For participants who cannot read, the guidelines stated in 2.2 paragraph 5 apply.

2. Researchers are to inform future participants that their participation is voluntary and that they may refuse to participate in the research or discontinue their participation without stating a reason. Researchers are to inform participants about important factors that could potentially influence their willingness to participate (e.g., risks, inconvenience, negative consequences, or limitations to confidentiality), and they are to explain other aspects about which future participants ask. Researchers are to inform participants about the manner of reporting and the nature of the personal research results that will be included in the reporting.

3. Participants are to be given sufficient opportunity to read the information, to ask questions of the researcher, and to consider participation.

4. Participants are to be asked for consent based on the information in the information letter or leaflet, as well as information provided orally by the researcher. In addition to the title of the study, the specific reference (date/version) of the information leaflet is to be stated on the consent form.

5. Children and people who are decisionally incompetent may not be involved in the research unless there are no alternatives for obtaining the data and unless the research is aimed at obtaining insight into or improving the treatment of these participants. Moreover, such research is subject to the condition that the burden to participants must be minimal. When possible, researchers are to provide explanation appropriate to the situation. All such cases require informed consent from the legal representatives.
6. For research involving children younger than 12 years of age and people who are decisionally incompetent, the consent form is to be signed by the participant’s legal representative. For research involving children between the ages of 12 and 16 years, a consent form is to be signed by both the child and the legal representative. No consent from a legal representative is required for participants 16 years of age or older. For research involving groups of children or adolescents, see Section 2.4.

7. When conducting research involving participants who are dependent upon the researchers in some manner, researchers are to take precautionary measures to protect future participants from any negative consequences of premature termination or refusal to participate. If participation in a study is a requirement for the degree program or an opportunity to earn credits, future participants are to be offered a choice of alternatives. Students who do not wish to make themselves available as participants in principle are to be offered the opportunity to complete an alternative study component.

8. In the recruitment of participants, if professional services (e.g., treatment or instruction) are offered as compensation for participating in the study, researchers are to clearly state the nature of the services and the potential risks, obligations, and limitations associated with these services.

9. Researchers must not offer any excessive or inappropriate financial or other rewards in order to recruit participants.

2.3 Research procedures

1. In conducting their research, researchers are to adhere to Dutch legislation, and particularly to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (see list of sources).

2. Researchers must not use any methods that violate the dignity of participants or that intrude into their private lives any more than necessary for the stated objective.

3. Researchers are to ensure that they abide by all agreements that they have made with participants. This applies to the agreements documented in the information letter or leaflet, as well as to agreements that have been made orally before, during or after the study.

4. Researchers must not conduct any research involving deception, unless the use of deception is justified by the expected scientific, didactic or applied value of the study. Deception is to be performed only in the absence of effective procedures that do not involve deception. Participants must not be deceived about any potential risks and inconveniences associated with participation in the research. Any form of deception that is an essential characteristic of the subject of conducting a study should be explained to participants as soon as possible. This should preferably be done at the end of their participation, but no later than the end of the research.

Prior to the study, researchers are to inform participants of the personal research data that they will receive after the study. Upon request, researchers are to allow participants to review all data collected from them, as long as it does not result in the release of personally identifiable information referring to study participants other than themselves. Researchers are to report to participants about these data in a clear, comprehensible manner, and they should attempt to correct any obvious misunderstandings that participants might have after the research has been completed.

5. Researchers are to allow participants the opportunity to receive information concerning the nature, results, and conclusions of the research. This should be in the form of a general research report in which no individual data are revealed. The reporting is to be done in a manner that is clear and comprehensible to participants.
6. If scientific or human values justify delaying or withholding information, researchers are to take appropriate measures to restrict the associated risks of harm as much as possible. Researchers are to inform participants about this matter prior to the research.

7. The privacy of the participant must be respected, and personal data must be treated as confidential. Personal data are to be stored separately from research data (see also Section 2.1).

8. Researchers are to ensure that the presentation of research data in any form is done in an anonymized manner.

9. In all cases, data from research are to be stored until after the objective for which the data were collected has been achieved and the reporting in the form of publications has been concluded. Data should preferably be stored for 10 years. The researcher and the head of the research department must ensure the safe storage of data. In this case as well, personally identifiable data are to be stored separately from the research data. Data for participants objecting to the use of their data are to be destroyed immediately, if they have not yet been used in publications. If the data have been used in publications and if the researcher is therefore obliged to meet the requirement of replicability, the personally identifiable data are to be destroyed and the data anonymized.

10. Data that are suitable for reuse by other researchers should preferably be transferred to an institution established for this purpose. Examples include Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS: https://knaw.dans.nl) in The Hague or Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/). This is subject to the conditions stated in this article.

11. If data are used by other experts, researchers are to ensure that the privacy of the participants is protected to the same extent. Databases are to be anonymized before data are shared with other experts. If personally identifiable data from participants are exchanged, the researcher must first obtain written consent from the participants (see Section 2.1). With due observance of the other points in these guidelines, informed consent is not required for research involving fully anonymized data files or field observations without manipulation.

12. Researchers must obtain explicit consent from participants in order to use film recordings or registrations of behavior made in any other manner in research. This applies unless the research involves only field observations in public places and the registration is not expected to be used in a manner that could lead to personal identification.
2.4 Research on groups

Research in the fields of education and special education can involve group processes or research on the effect that a change in a given situation has on a large group of people. Examples include research on interactions between children or on the effect that a method applied by teachers has on students or children in situations before or outside of school. In such studies, researchers should make every effort to adhere to the guidelines stated above as closely as possible. When studying groups of people within an existing institutional setting (e.g., classroom or playroom), however, it is not always possible to obtain informed consent from every individual separately, although the research data cannot be obtained in any other way. In such cases, the researcher may collect and use the data under a number of conditions. The conditions are as follows:

1. Informed consent has been obtained from the directors of the institution in which the research is conducted, as well as from the parties who are directly responsible for the group being studied within the institution.
2. Information has been provided in writing to participants or their legal representatives, and they have signed no objection to the research (passive informed consent).
3. If personally identifiable data are collected, they are treated as stated in Section 2.1 (see also Section 2.3, point 12).
4. Reporting on the research results is done exclusively at the group level. This also applies to the reports to the institution in which the research was conducted.
5. The research does not entail any special burden to the participants.
6. The research is conducted in the ordinary setting of the group being studied. If the effect of a working method is being studied, it is a working method that has been established and carried out by the institution itself, or it has been approved by the institution and the educator involved and performed under their supervision.
3 ETHICS COMMITTEE

3.1 Objective

1. The objective of the Ethics Committee is to ensure that scientific research involving human subjects is conducted in an ethically responsible manner.
2. The duties of the Ethics Committee are as follows: 1) the ethical assessment of proposed research and 2) the promotion of ethical action by researchers.
3. The Ethics Committee advises the director of research with regard to the ethical admissibility of the research.

3.2 Composition

1. The Ethics Committee is composed of at least four representatives of the academic staff of the basic units Educational Theory, Education, Special Needs Education and Youth Studies, along with a secretary.
2. The Ethics Committee consists of a general chair, a vice-chair, members, and an administrative secretary.
3. The committee is consulted for the assessment of the ethical qualities of a research proposal. Each proposal is assessed by two or three members of this committee. In light of the scientific, moral and social aspects of the assessment, the committee is to be composed in such a way that it at least reflects the various types of research conducted within the Department.
4. Appointments are made by the directors of the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences, upon nomination by the committee. Members serve for an indefinite term.
5. The committee submits its own nominations for members to the directors and makes its own determination concerning how the choice of a chair, vice-chair, secretary and members is to occur.
## 3.3 Working methods

1. In discharging its duties, the committee proceeds from the ethical principles elaborated in this document. The directors of the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences make these principles available to all staff members and to the participants who will be involved in the research (including through publication on the website). All staff members must adhere to the principles.

2. The committee focuses on all research in which participants are involved and that is conducted in whole or in part by the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences (or its staff, visiting staff or students).

3. The committee establishes its own working methods. The committee documents its working methods in regulations that are submitted to the Management Team (MT) for approval.

4. The committee should receive support from an administrative secretary, whose duties include the administration of the documents to be assessed and forwarding them to the party submitting the research proposal.

5. The full committee meets at least twice each year.

6. Proposals must be submitted to the administrative secretary.

7. The committee sends confirmation of receipt within two weeks after receiving a proposal. Within four weeks, the party submitting the proposal will be notified of the judgement concerning the proposal. Any delays will be communicated to the party submitting the proposal in a timely manner.

8. The committee may consult other experts in the assessment of proposals.

9. Researchers are responsible for determining whether research falling under their responsibility should be submitted to the medical ethics committee, based on these regulations.

10. The committee ensures that the Pedok Ethics Regulations and the forms to be submitted are available through the webpage.

11. Research that must be assessed by the METC should be submitted directly to the METC. Submission must take place according to the guidelines of the METC.

12. The researcher bears primary responsibility for the scientific quality of the research. The Ethics Committee conducts the ethics assessment.
4 SUBMITTING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR ASSESSMENT

A request consists of a letter of submission and the following documents:
- Reporting form for proposed research in the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences
- Research proposal
- Information and recruitment leaflets
- Informed consent forms
- Statement of confidentiality
- All other documents that are relevant to the assessment.

Requests must be submitted to the secretary of the Ethics Committee.

The research proposal consists of at least the following components:
- Brief title of the study
- Basic unit
- Name and position of the operational researcher(s)
- Name of the supervising researcher(s)
- Brief description of the research design
- Expected starting date and duration
- Location where the research will be conducted
- Description of the research population
- Description of the strategy for recruiting participants
- Which information will be reported back to the participant? Does this information have possible consequences for the participant? If so, what form of guidance will the participant receive in this regard?

The information and recruitment leaflets and the informed consent forms must meet the guidelines stated in the manual for reviewing medical research involving human subjects.
5  RIGHT OF COMPLAINT

In the case of disagreement regarding a recommendation issued by the Ethics Committee, the researcher may submit an objection in writing to the EC, stating the grounds of the objection. If no resolution can be reached, the researcher can turn to the director of research for the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences.

The director of research bears ultimate responsibility for the recommendations of the EC, as well as for the research conducted within the institute. The director of research assesses whether a recommendation from the EC Pedok is in accordance with the law and any other applicable regulations concerning research in the social and behavioral sciences in the Netherlands, as well as with customary practice within the research discipline. The director of research may confirm, adjust or reject the recommendation of the EC. If a recommendation is rejected, the EC formulates a new recommendation, with due consideration of the objections.

Participants or their legal representatives wishing to lodge an objection to a procedure applied by a researcher should first approach the researcher. If this does not lead to a resolution, the participant or the representative of the participant may submit a complaint in writing to the Ethics Committee. The EC will hear and possibly react to statements from the researcher. If the EC deems that the researcher has not behaved in accordance with the law or any other applicable regulations for research in the social and behavioral sciences in the Netherlands, the EC will notify the director of research for the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences. After hearing statements from the researcher, the director of research will decide whether measures are necessary.
6 SOURCES

6.1 Guidelines


6.2 Legislation


6.3 Manuals


6.4 Important addresses:
Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects
PO Box 16302, 2500 BH THE HAGUE
+31 (0)70 340 6700
ccmo@ccmo.nl

Dutch Data Protection Authority
PO Box 93374, 2509 AJ THE HAGUE
https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl

Privacy Information and Reporting Center
+31 (0)88 - 1805 250