Theme 7: Ethics

The Ethics Committee

Your group will take the role of an ethics committee giving or withholding ‘ethical approval’ to researchers. Individually you will need read each example and consider whether you would give ethical approval? Why or why not?

Use the information from various Ethical Guides to support your answers.

Discuss your ideas with the rest of the committee and decide is: Approval Granted or Approval Denied.

1. A group of psychologists conducted a field experiment at a London bus stop. They arranged for an assistant to pretend to need money for a bus journey. Sometimes the assistant pretended to be disabled, other times the assistant pretended to be drunk. They found that the public were less willing to help when the assistant pretended to be drunk. The psychologists video recorded the events from a hidden camera at the bus stop.

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| Approval Granted | Approval Denied |
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Reasons for decision:

1. Manchester Armed Response Unit would like to investigate the emerging culture of ‘have a go heroes’ during violent crimes. They would like to have undercover police officers pretend to be criminals and ‘rob’ an off-licence using a fake gun. The members of the public will not be aware of the experiment (including the shop keeper) to ensure realism.

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| Approval Granted | Approval Denied |
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Reasons for decision:

1. A researcher wants to gather data on homeless people and alcoholism. As many participants are reluctant to take part, he offers to pay them each £100 to do a one-hour interview. He decides that the information he has gathered is very interesting and uses their data to make a television programme.

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| Approval Granted | Approval Denied |
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Reasons for decision:

1. The ‘Sunshine Wellness Baby Centre’ would like to investigate whether women have a greater resistance to pain during labour than at the beginning of their pregnancy. They will approach women during their first midwife appointment and offer them £1,000 to take part in the study. Women will need to attend a monthly appointment at the Baby Centre where they will receive an electric shock (beginning with 60v) and rate their pain level on a chart. The voltage will increase until the participant feels it would be too painful to continue.

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Reasons for decision:

1. A teacher is interested in doing some research on students’ attitudes towards different methods of teaching. The week before the exams, she asks students to volunteer to participate in her study. Students are not sure, but they think they might benefit from this by getting some extra support before the exams or perhaps the teacher may give them preferential treatment when marking the exams. In focus group interviews, she asks them a range of questions which ask them to rate the teaching methods used by different teachers.

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| Approval Granted | Approval Denied |
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Reasons for decision:

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| Module Learning Outcomes Covered | Academic Literacies Covered |
| ML1 | AL2 |
| ML2 | AL3 |
| Choose an item. | AL4 |