Research ethics and permission

Dr Michael T Ross

24th April 2015

Grazer Conference, Innsbruck

Overview

Issues and pitfalls in educational research

What do editors expect?

A strategy for ethical education research

Scenarios and discussion

Your experiences?

What are potential issues and pitfalls in publishing educational research?

Some issues

Coercion to participate

Influencing assessment

Potential unfair advantage

Pressure on student time

Institutional reputation

Identifiable / leaked data

Plagiarism / ‘salami-slicing’

Disadvantage / harm

Little potential benefit

Conflict of interest

Research as ‘evaluation’

Authorship issues

What do editors expect?

Code of Conduct
Flowcharts
Guidelines
International standards for editors and authors
eLearning
Discussion Documents
COPE Digest
Seminars
COPE Research Grant
Resources and Further Reading

Guidelines

www.publicationethics.org

Other than the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors (PDF, 298 kb) and Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers (PDF, 38 kb), COPE has written guidelines on the following:

Sharing of Information Among Editors-in-Chief Regarding Possible Misconduct

These guidelines have been issued following a COPE Discussion Forum (4 September 2013, http://tinyurl.com/pn43bxk) and Discussion Document (February 2014, http://tinyurl.com/lqag4uh) on the subject, and it was initiated in the wake of a number of high-profile cases of research misconduct in which the sharing of information between the relevant editors-in-chief (EiCs) was crucial to the final settlement of the cases. Download PDF (136 KB) © 2015 COPE

Text recycling guidelines for editors

A common issue encountered by editors is overlap of text with an author's own previously published work, particularly with the increasing use of plagiarism detection software. This practice is known as 'text recycling' (also sometimes referred to as 'self-plagiarism')

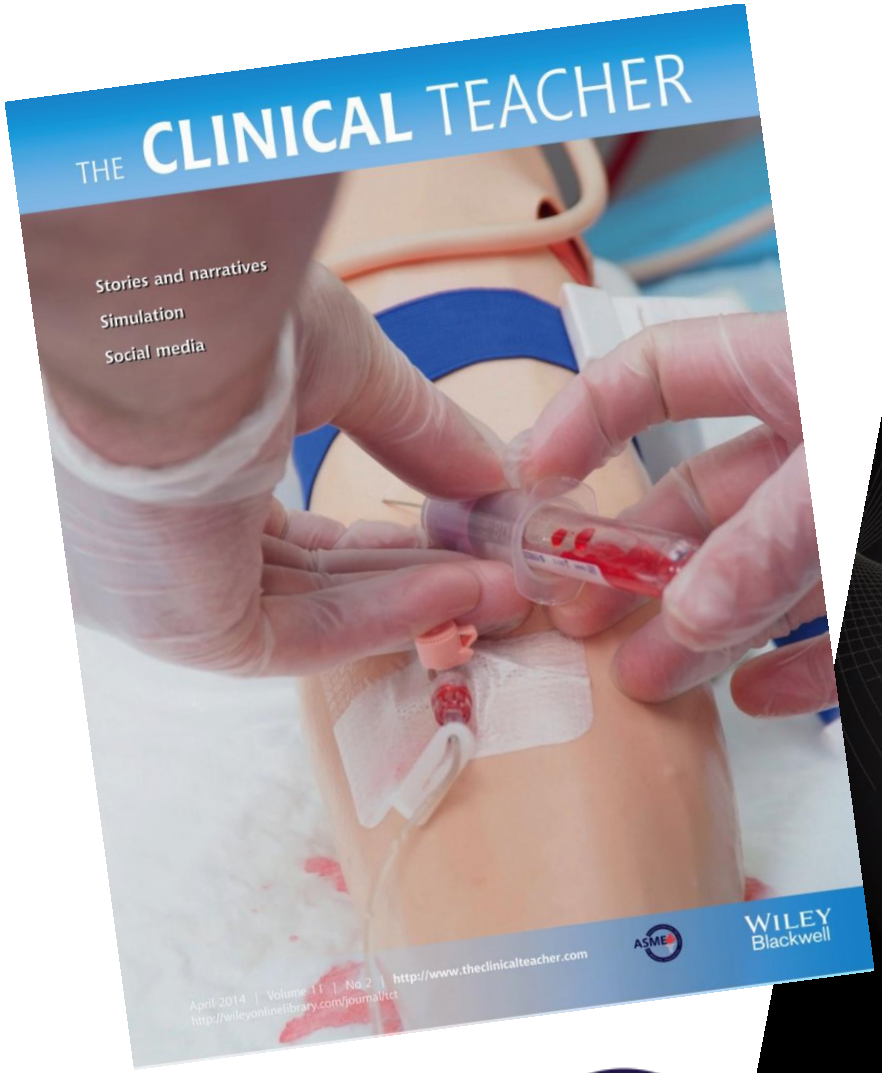
PDF

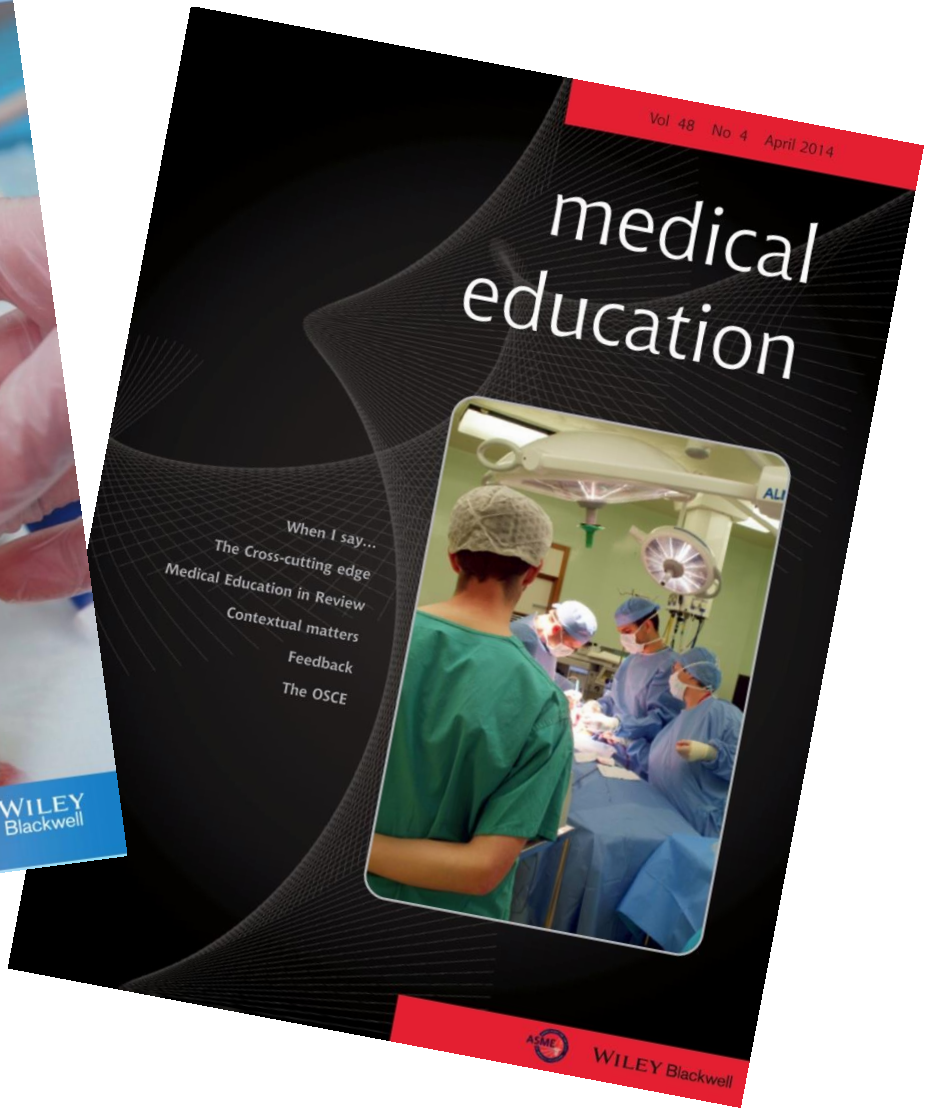
Sharing of Information Among Editors-in-Chief Regarding Possible Misconduct (March 2015)
Download 137.29 KB

PDF

BioMed Central text recycling guidelines
Download 651.48 KB

PDF





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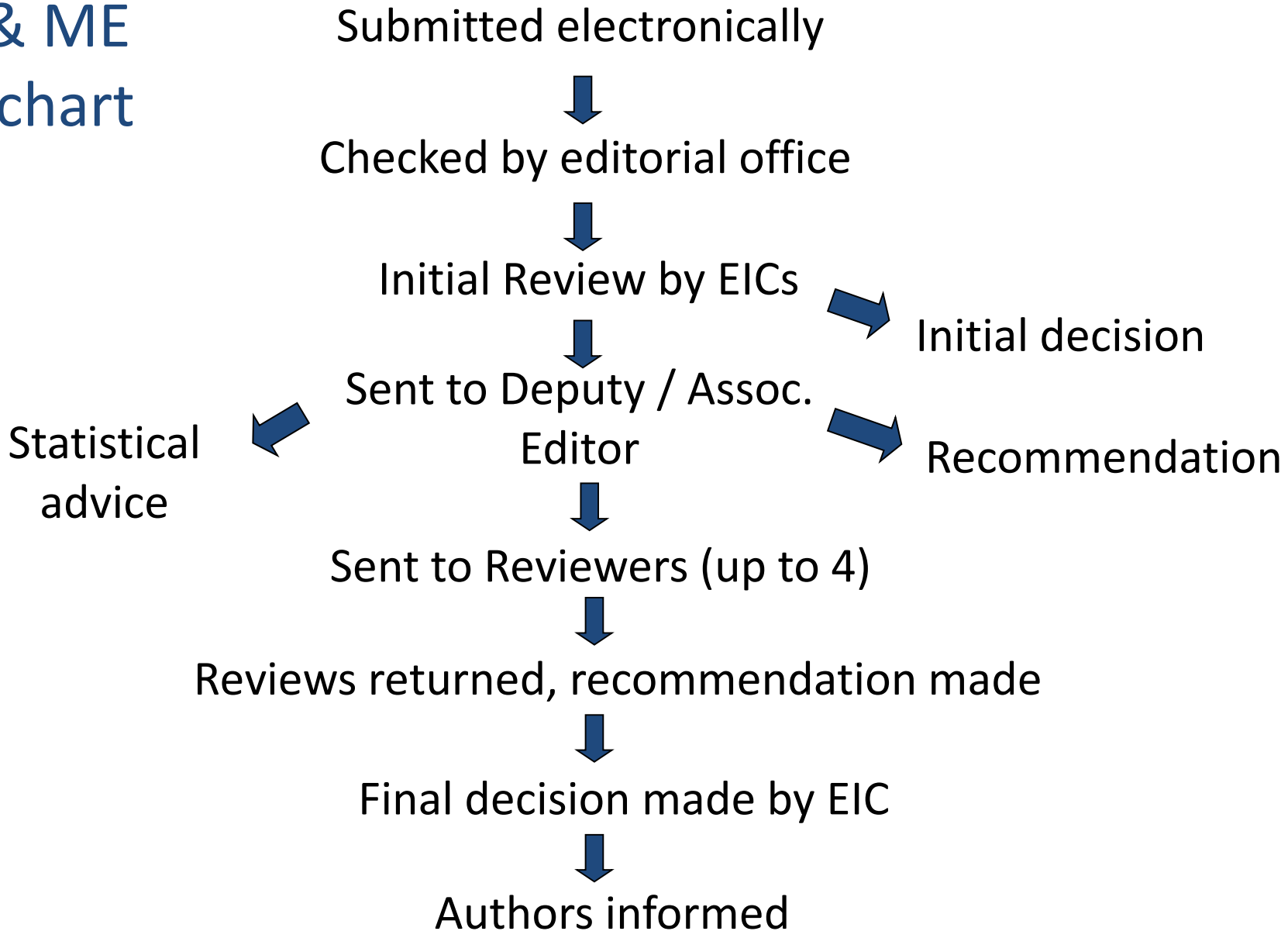
TCT & ME Flowchart



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Initial Review by EIC

Read manuscript

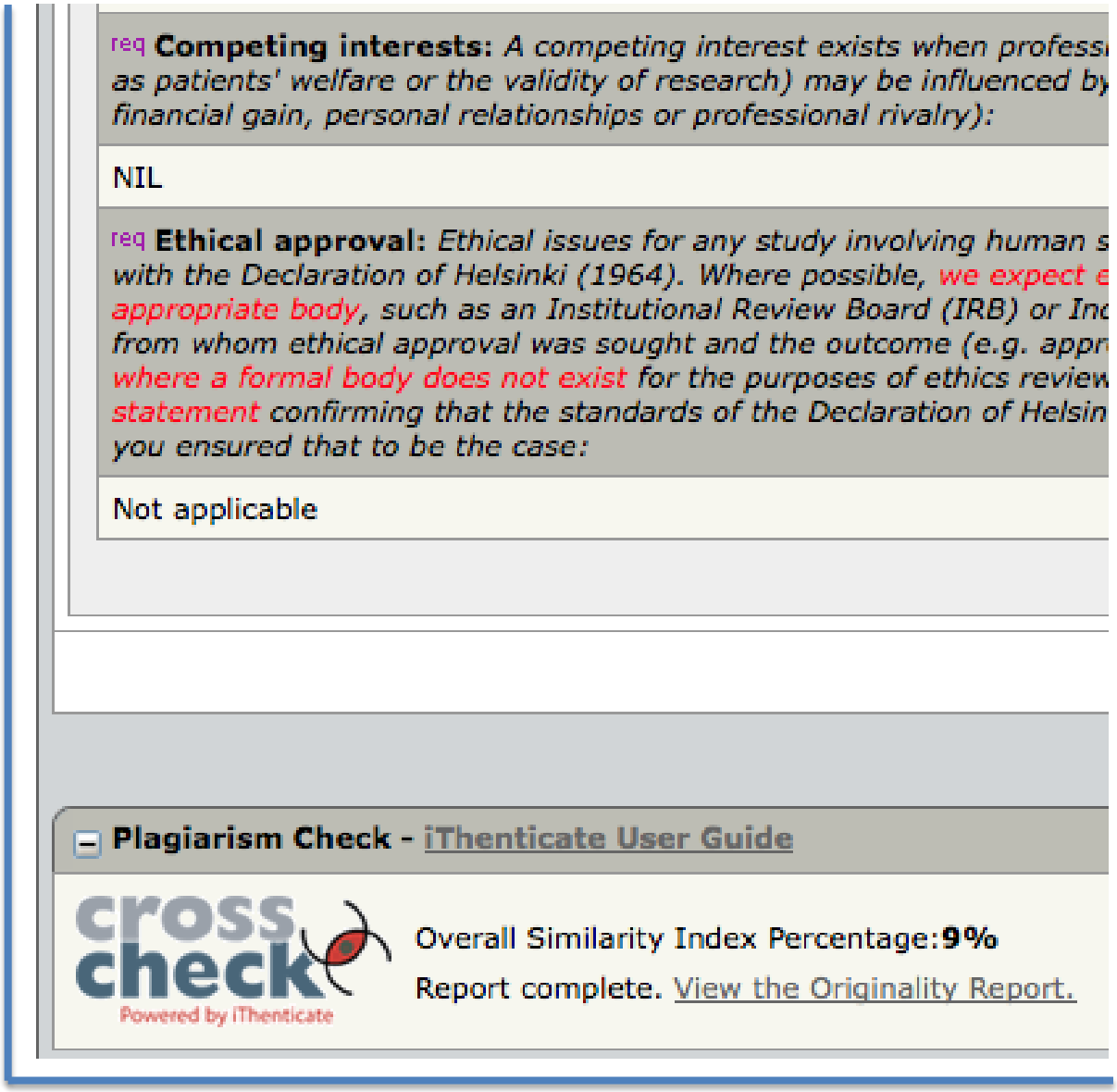
Read cover letter, cross-check report, notes

Write some comments / notes

Make a decision

- ☐ Send for Review
- ☐ Accept
- ☐ Minor Revision
- ☐ Major Revision
- ☐ Reject (or ‘Unsubmit’)

Letter
Authors
Interests
Ethics
Overlap
Format



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Common reasons for early rejection

Ethical issues / lacks appropriate permissions

Doesn't comply with guidelines for authors

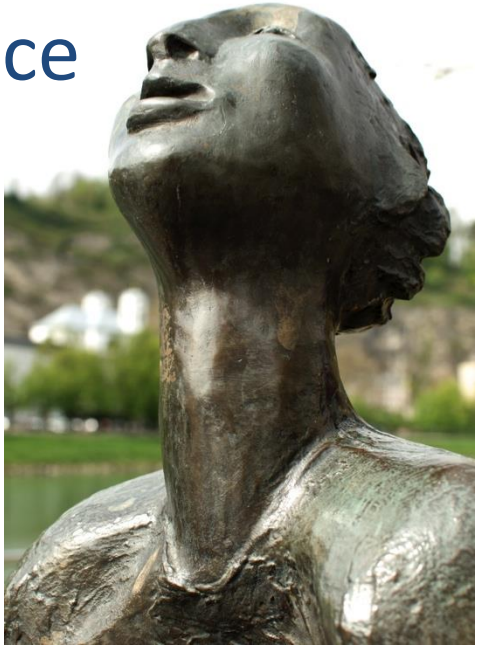
Poor fit / not aimed at target audience

Incomprehensible

Doesn't add to the literature

Serious methodological issues

Not aligned / unsupported claims



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Ethical issues of concern

(Potential ethical issues not adequately discussed)

Lacks participant consent for data collection

Data collected as evaluation, no consent to publish

No attempt to seek ethical approval or opinion

Lacks institutional permission

Concerns about fairness, assessment, harm, etc

Concerns about authorship / duplication / interests

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Editorial

Research ethics and permission

Ethical issues are, by nature, complex and multifaceted. Whereas most of us always want to behave ethically, when we become very focused on one aspect of our work it may be difficult to step back and take a broad overview, and remain confident that our intended actions would be considered ethical and appropriate by others. This is compounded when there are potential conflicts of interest, for example pressures from employers and funding bodies. Ethics committees exist precisely for these reasons, as does the Declaration of Helsinki.[1] The declaration is a set of principles that emphasises the need to carefully consider in advance the ethical issues of any medical research, including consent, confidentiality, the weighing-up of potential benefits and risks, and independence from personal or financial interests, and then to submit research proposals for independent review by an ethics committee. The principles have been substantially embedded into medical and allied health care education, and it is now virtually unthinkable to conduct research involving patients without adhering to these principles. Unfortunately, we cannot yet say the same for educational research involving health care students and trainees.

Two years ago, *The Clinical Teacher* published an editorial outlining the journal's expectations regarding ethical approval for submitted manuscripts, along with other aspects of publication ethics such as authorship and plagiarism.[2] Our expectations draw heavily on the Declaration of Helsinki, and also on guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics,[3] our publisher, Wiley,[4] the British Educational Research Association,[5] and the academic literature. Firstly, we expect manuscripts to describe ethically justified research or evaluation. Eikeboom and colleagues highlight that such research is able to generate valuable knowledge through valid research design, demonstrates respect for participants with informed consent, maximises potential benefits and minimises risks for participants and society, and treats participants equitably.[6] We expect similar standards for the design of evaluation studies if data are to be submitted for publication. Secondly, we expect authors to carefully reflect on the potential ethical issues related to their research or evaluation, including the need for verbal or written informed consent, and the potential for coercion in dependent relationships (e.g. between a teacher and a student). New researchers will find books on research methodology, such as those by Merriam or Cousin, helpful in explaining the features of ethical and trustworthy research.[7,8] Cousin also reminds us that 'An ethical orientation supports the thoughtful conduct of the research process and the eventual credibility of the report…[and] should never be viewed as a tiresome preliminary to the real business of research'.[8] Thirdly, we expect authors to submit their research proposals for formal ethics committee review and institutional approval from the medical school, hospital or training programme, where appropriate, including proposals to reanalyse or publish evaluation or assessment data that have already been collected for educational purposes. We recognise, however, that in some situations clinical educators may not have access to a formal ethics committee, and so an opinion on the proposed research from a senior colleague who is independent of the study may be appropriate. Finally, we expect authors to document the ethical issues considered, and to provide evidence for ethical or institutional approval, in their submission to *The Clinical Teacher*.

When authors submit a manuscript to *The Clinical Teacher*, they must complete a free-text box about ethical issues, which states:

'Ethical issues for any study involving human subjects should

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TCT - Dec 2014 Editorial

1. Ethically-justified research design (appropriate and valid study design, conducted ethically)
2. Authors reflected on potential ethical issues
3. Authors submitted proposal for ethical and institutional approval or opinion as appropriate
4. Ethical issues and permissions documented

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Ethical approval: good responses

Careful consideration of potential ethical issues (consent, confidentiality, equity, risk/benefit…)

Detail of how ensured research was conducted ethically – e.g. procedure for participant consent

Independent ethical approval or opinion

Institutional (managerial) approval or opinion

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Ethical approval: poor responses

"Not applicable" or "n/a"

"No human subjects"

"Project was evaluation rather than research"

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Duplicate publication & ‘salami slicing’

Content of one paper overlaps substantially with another

Authors sign a declaration

All papers submitted through CrossCheck software

ICMJE defines ‘substantially’ as >10%, but varies by journal

Conference abstracts are generally acceptable, but should be referenced if published

If in any doubt, reference +/- submit the original

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Copying and / or fabricating material

Can be accidental or deliberate

Any aspects of results, methods, institutional or ethical approval, author contributions, etc

Generally considered as misconduct +/- fraudulent

Strong imperative to inform author's institution if serious, and author may be 'blacklisted'

Can be career-ending

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Conflicts of Interest

Author has ties to activities which could inappropriately influence their judgement

Irrespective of whether judgement is affected

Similar issues for reviewers and editors

If in doubt, declare it!

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Strategy for ethical education research

Strategy for ethical education research

Understand / apply principles of ethically-justified research

Plan ahead, or as soon as think may want to publish data

Carefully consider & document potential ethical issues

Seek approval / independent opinion on plan and issues

Provide details of issues, approval and research methods

‘Ethically justified research’

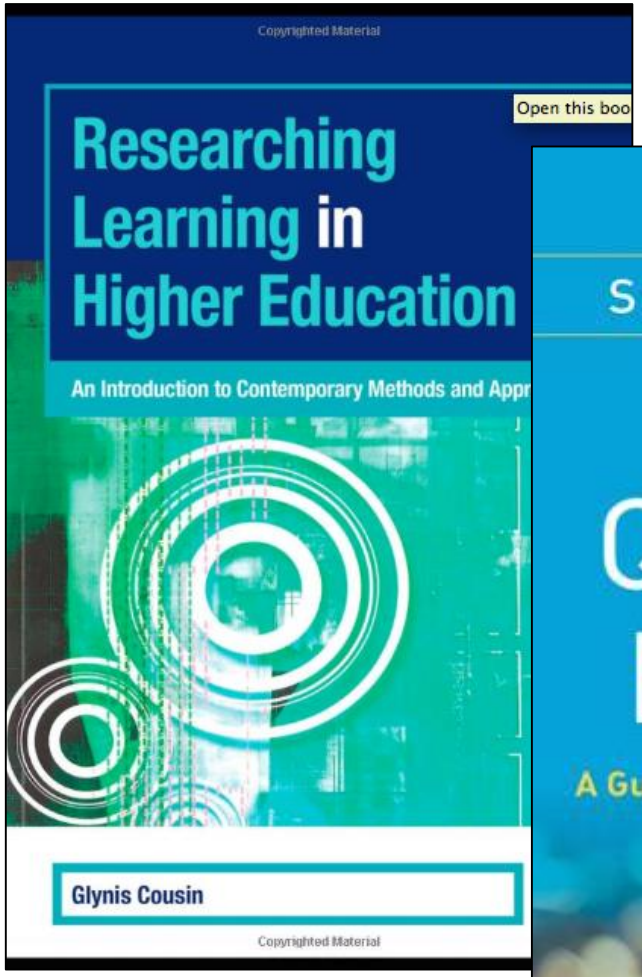
Valid research design to generate valuable knowledge

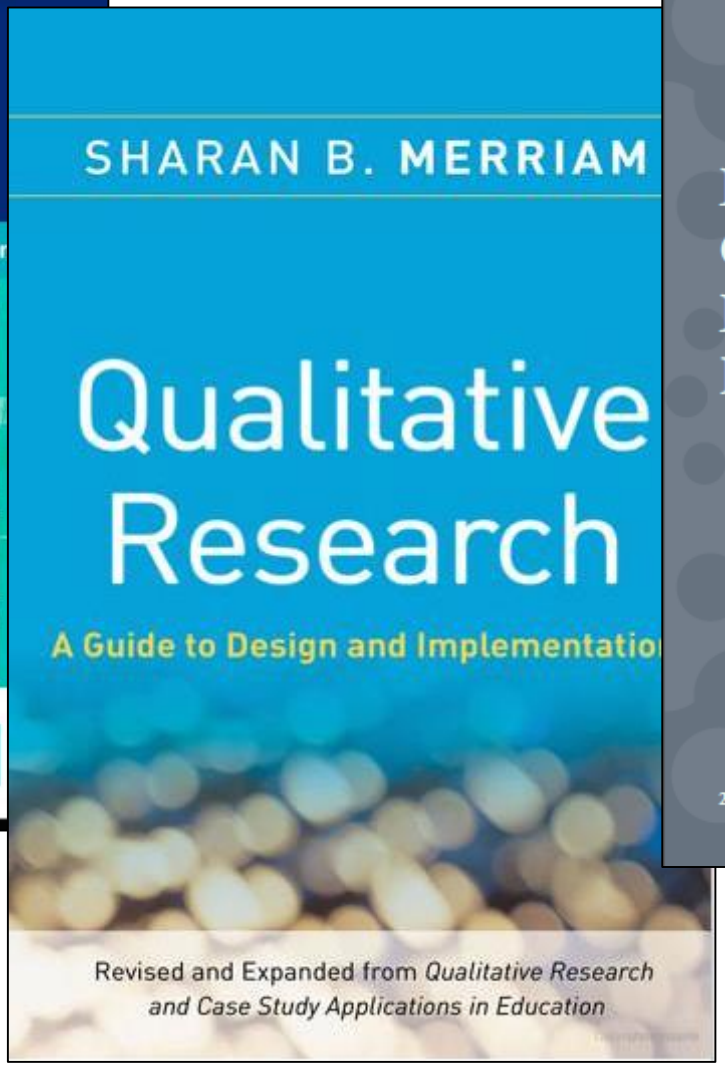
Respect for participants, including consent & privacy

Balance potential benefits and risks to individual & society

Treat participants and their peers equitably

Eikelboom et al (2012) A framework for the ethics review of education research. Med Ed 46:731-733





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centre for medical education

Scenarios

Descriptive papers

Existing evaluation data

Student opinions

‘Experiments’

University staff

Healthcare staff

Patients and public

(Inter)National research

Thank you!

Dr Michael T Ross
michael.ross@ed.ac.uk