



Research Ethics and Integrity ECR Role in the Arts

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London

Amplifying Early Career Researcher Voices: Promoting Care and Respect in Research

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama has created a dedicated ECR role holding significant responsibility for research ethics and integrity, ensuring best practices are embedded across the School at all career levels. Central recognised that ECRs are often left out of conversations involving research integrity, meaning their perspectives are missing from policy and decision making. Central created this role for an ECR with the aim of bringing them into the heart of such discussions.

Encouraging Research Integrity

Research @ Central explores contemporary practices of theatre-making and performance as well as their cultural histories and lineages. It interrogates theatre and performance both in themselves and in interplay with other disciplines, including their wider socio-cultural, institutional, political, and material-economic contexts and conditions.*

Research integrity is core within Central as it ensures the institution realises a commitment to carry out research fairly and with equal treatment.

ECR Research Ethics and Integrity Role

The role that Central has created encompasses several activities:

Supporting the Chair of Central's Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REISC) in decision making, policy development and producing guidance around research ethics and integrity.

Acting as Secretary which involves managing the Subcommittee work and producing papers and reports about research ethics activities undertaken across the School.

Acting as the Secretary and Administrator of the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee (CUK REC), where they support members in decision making around applications for ethical review and administrating ethics processes for CUK.

The position aims to enhance the understanding and practical know-how in research ethics and integrity across Central through training for undergraduate, MA and MFA taught students, PGRs, through development sessions delivered independently and alongside the Chair of the Research Ethics and Integrity Subcommittee (REISC). The role has seen advice offered to individual colleagues on informal matters related to ethics in teaching and research and formal questions around research ethics and integrity processes and procedures. The ECR engages in external consultancy, alongside the chair of REISC, giving advice to bodies such as Conservatoires UK (on developing guidance in other institutions around research ethics and funding, and ethics within evaluation processes); UK CORI, about the impact of research ethics and integrity for SSIs and their needs (recommending the need for flexible and fluid processes and procedures given the capacity limits of SSIs, and the particular challenges that the arts and humanities encounter in relation to research ethics processes and procedures).

*[The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. (n.d.). *Research at Central*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/Research> [Accessed 15 May 2023].]



Benefits of the Role

The institution benefits from improved processes leading to better quality research outputs with a greater level of research integrity incorporated across all of its practising researchers, as the role ensures the specific concerns of ECRs are articulated at the heart of decision-making processes within Central. As an active research staff member, the engagement with administrative processes and leadership around integrity means processes and procedures are developed with the needs of researchers in mind, enabling more nuanced engagements with the work but also encouraging researchers at all career stages to centre integrity in their research.

The ECR benefits from a greater understanding of research ethics and integrity both inside and outside of the institution, providing greater insight into research practices at an early careers stage and the opportunity to learn from, and contribute to, debate with more senior staff members and those from other disciplines and organisations.

“As an Early Career Researcher (ECR), working on research ethics and integrity has allowed me to have a greater understanding of the research landscape at a national level, but has also helped me to have a deeper recognition of my own research processes in relation to these national movements. When I started this work, I was told that good ethical practice made research better, and through my work I have seen that is definitely true. Ethics is not just a thing we tick off at the start of a research process, but it runs throughout a project in complex and plural ways. Being an ECR, I also get to promote the needs of other researchers like me in these wider institutional and national conversations, ensuring our needs as emerging researchers and future leaders at the centre of these processes.” Dr Joe Parslow - Research Ethics and Integrity Role @ Central

Furthermore, according to Professor Maria Delgado, Vice Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) of Central, ECRs are uniquely positioned to offer leadership in this area; it is important that ECRs are given a voice in shaping best practice in research and integrity and given a role in defining guidance that works for all researchers. **Don't say you are giving ECRs a role at the table, give them a role at the table. This is distributed leadership in action.**