

Table 5.1 Ethical questions to ask

External/ecological	Questions to consider
Cultural sensitivity	What are the values, norms and roles in the environment in which I am working?
Awareness of all parts of the institution	What is the relationship between the group I am working with and the other parts of the institution as a whole? How does it affect the participants?
Responsive communication – awareness of the wishes of others	How might my work be viewed/interpreted by others in the institution? How will the language I use be interpreted?
Responsibilities to sponsors	What are my responsibilities to the people paying for this research (sponsors, my school, grant-awarding bodies)?
BERA codes	Have I stuck to the BERA guidelines?
Efficiency/use of resources	Have I made efficient use of the resources available to me – including people's time?
Quality of evidence on which conclusions are based	Have I got enough evidence to back up my conclusions and recommendations?
The law	What are the implications of what I want to do within the ECM agenda? Do I need written permissions? Is anyone at risk as a result of my research?
Consequential/utilitarian	
Benefits for individuals – informed consent	Have I made sure that all the people involved know what I am doing and why? Are they aware that they can withdraw if they wish? How will I ensure confidentiality?

Consequential/utilitarian

Benefits for particular groups	What are the benefits of me doing my research to the organization/school/department? Could these be increased in any way? How will I ensure that they know about my findings? Is my work relevant to the school development plan?
Most benefits for society	Is this a worthwhile area to research? Am I contributing to the 'greater good'?
Benefits for the researcher	Is this something that other people working in education might care about? Am I going to be able to get enough data to write a good thesis? Is this a topic I really care about? Will this work contribute to my professional development?

Deontological

Avoidance of wrong – honesty and candour	Have I been open and honest with everyone who might be affected by this research?
Minimization of harm – be fair	Have I treated all participants fairly? Do I have a clear rationale for selecting the participants? Are they willing to be involved?
Reciprocity – do they really understand what I am doing?	What will I do if I find out something that the participants/school/department do not like? How will I report unpopular findings?
Doing the most positive good	Is there any other way I can carry out this research that would bring more benefits to those involved?

Relational/individual

Genuine collaboration/trust established	Who are the key people involved? How can I build a constructive relationship with them?
Avoiding imposition/respecting autonomy	Am I making unreasonable demands on any individuals? Do they appreciate that participation is voluntary? Am I acting in a way that might constitute an imposition?
Confirmation of findings	What steps will I take in my methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings?
Respecting persons equally	How will I demonstrate my respect for all participants? Have I treated pupils in the same way as teachers?
