**PgCert Academic Practice in Art, Design and Communication**

**Action Research Project Ethical Enquiry Form**

**Participant name:** jackie roberts

**Cohort:** 3

**Tutor name [delete as appropriate]:** Rachel Marsden

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| 1. **What is your research question?** Evaluating and reflecting on my process as a psychotherapist and counsellor at UAL using a method of semi-fictional creative writing.   I will write three to five case study vignettes of client sessions, focussing on themes around social justice such as, inclusivity in terms of working with marginalised groups, women, people of colour, people from a low socio-economic background, and disabled people. I will look at intersectionality and positionality and show how I work from an Existential perspective. |
| 1. **Who will be providing you with information to help you answer your question, and how will you approach and/or select them?**   I will approach this using the action research cycle.  Step 1), define the problem/frame the research question  Following on from the inclusive practices unit I will reflect on the process of my work. I will do this by using creative writing to compose vignettes of my counselling sessions with students. The vignettes will be anonymised and semi-fictional to protect students’ confidentiality and to work ethically as both a psychotherapist and counsellor and also as a researcher.  In terms of social justice, I will reflect upon my own positionality and look at inclusivity and intersectionality as discussed above.  Sonyini Madison talks about the importance of positionality in research  “Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we denounce the power structures that surround our subjects. A concern for positionality is a reflexive ethnography; it is a turning back on ourselves. When we turn back on ourselves, we examine our intentions, our methods, and our possible effects. We are accountable for our research paradigms, our authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation”- D. Soyini Madison, Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance, third edition, (London: Sage, 2020) 6–7.  Intersectionality  “Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city … the main highway is “racism road.” One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression” -Kimberlé Crenshaw in Nira Yuval-Davis, “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics,” European Journal of Women's Studies 13, no. 3 (2006): 196.  Both positionality and intersectionality are important themes to give attention to in the therapy room.  I will select 3 – 5 students and I will select them based on these themes.  The vignettes will show how I work as an existential psychotherapist, and this will be a teaching exercise in the sense of providing my colleagues, within the counselling team, with a reflective piece of work demonstrating my process. There are different counsellor and psychotherapist modalities within the team - psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural, integrative, and I am the only existential psychotherapist, and it will be good opportunity to demonstrate how I work using a creative writing approach.  Before I start the research, I will need to gain the consent of my line manager. I will do this by talking with her in the first instance about the project and then I will send her an email and ask her to reply. If she agrees, her reply will be the consent for the project.  Step 2), I will email the students informing them of my research project. I will attach an information sheet and a consent form. I will let the students know that any identifying characteristics will be changed, and the vignettes will be semi-fictional and anonymised to protect client confidentiality. I will let the students know that they can withdraw consent at any time.  I will inform the students that any notes I make will be anonymised and kept in a password protected document.  I will then again gain consent but this time verbally at the beginning of the next counselling session. This will give the student the opportunity to ask me any questions regarding any concerns they may have.  Step 3) implement changes. This will be in terms of writing up the vignettes and by doing so I am reflecting on my process as a therapist. I am also providing the wider team with a creative method of talking about my work and therefore creating a learning opportunity within the team.  When designing the research project, I took into account the 6 ethical considerations from the UKSA statistics authority -  “Ensuring that inclusivity is appropriately addressed with any research or statistical project is important from both a legal and an ethical perspective. The UK Statistics Authority’s [six ethical principles](https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-authority-board/committees/national-statisticians-advisory-committees-and-panels/national-statisticians-data-ethics-advisory-committee/ethical-principles/) can be used as a framework to consider data ethics aspects of inclusivity:   * **Methods and quality**: The risks and limits of new technologies are considered and there is sufficient human oversight so that methods employed are consistent with recognised standards of integrity and quality. * **Transparency**: The access, use and sharing of data is transparent, and is communicated clearly and accessibly to the public. * **Legal compliance**: Data used and methods employed are consistent with legal requirements such as the Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Legislation [1], the Human Rights Act 1998, the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the common law duty of confidence. * **Public views and engagement**: The views of the public are considered in light of the data used and the perceived benefits of the research. * **Confidentiality and data security**: The data subject’s identity (whether person or organisation) is protected, information is kept confidential and secure, and the issue of consent is considered appropriately. * **Public good**: The use of data has clear benefits for users and serves the public good.”   UK Statistics Authority. (n.d.). *Ethical considerations related to the inclusivity of data for research and statistics*. [online] Available at: https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/ethical-considerations-related-to-the-inclusivity-of-data-for-research-and-statistics [Accessed 9 Nov. 2023].  ‌ |
| 1. **What will you be asking participants to do?**   I will ask students to give their consent for me to use some of the themes we talk about in our counselling sessions together to create anonymised semi-fictional vignettes to inform my teaching practice as part of the work I am doing for the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Art, Design and Communication.  The themes which will inform my vignettes will be around social justice and specifically inclusivity in terms of working as a white female middle class psychotherapist and counsellor (detailing my own positionality) with students of colour, those coming from low-socio-economic backgrounds, and those with a disability. I will not focus on any particular student but instead the vignettes will be semi-fictional as they will encompass my work with students over the past eight years working at UAL. |
| 1. **How will you get informed consent from these participants?**   For the students I will send out an information sheet and a consent form to sign before our next counselling session. I will also ask for explicit consent to use the content of our sessions together to write anonymised and semi-fictional vignettes. I will also send the information sheet and consent form to colleagues too and also to my line manager to gain explicit consent. |
| 1. **What potential risks to the interests of participants do you foresee and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?**   Students may feel vulnerable sharing their personal experience for my research and it could potentially feel emotionally taxing. It could also have an impact on our subsequent sessions together as they may feel that they have to sensor what they say, or they may feel that they need to deliver something specific.  To minimise the risks, I will make it clear that my writing for my research project is semi-fictional and so I will only be using themes across my sessions with students generally and they will be anonymised. I will not be using what they say in sessions.  It is worth noting disclosure. It would not be necessary to mention disclosure to students as this is already made explicit when contracting the psychotherapy and counselling sessions with students. |
| 1. **What potential risks to yourself as the practitioner do you foresee and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?**   Time is the biggest factor. I will seek as much support and guidance as possible from tutors and my peers and look to ways of focussing the project so as to not make it too broad, whilst still covering all of the learning outcomes.  I will take care of myself by writing in specific blocks of time and having breaks in between. I will try and write at the beginning of the day as this is when I have the most energy. I will go out into nature and go for walks or to get a coffee to decompress. I will also write up my experience in a blog post, whilst keeping the content and any identifying features anonymous, as I find that writing helps me to process emotion.  There have been lots of changes during the past term, the move to east bank as well as a new line manager. My previous manager has worked at UAL for a long-time and is knowledgeable about the demands of the PGCert and has been incredibly supportive. This has the potential to create some anxiety as the new manager will need time to get to know about me and about the PGCert as well as getting to grips with her role and UAL as a whole.  I have read articles related to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue in higher education and I am mindful to take care of myself during the ARP. An article about emotionally demanding research by the university of Sheffield was particularly useful when thinking about how subjects relating to marginalisation can be emotionally demanding on me the researcher. Some things to consider are:  Trying to separate work and home life and to do most of the work at the university. I will check emails during work time or dedicated ARP time and not during recreation/self-care time at home and during parts of the weekend.  I will manage the workload by doing what is achievable in a heathy way – not to make the project too complicated for example.  I am also aware of the employee assistance program to access therapy should I start to feel overwhelmed.  I will make sure to take breaks often and to prioritise exercise, sleeping well, and eating well.  I have been in regular communication with my line manager who supports the project and knows that it is a lot of work and has been incredibly helpful. I am meeting with my new line manager on Thursday, and I will be able to talk to her about the project and ask for her support.  I will go for morning walks in the park when the weather is nice as this always helps me to decompress.  I also have weekly clinical supervision where I can talk about anything that comes up within the sessions– some may disclose experiences of discrimination, trauma, racism for example and I have a space where I can talk about the impact that this may have on me as a therapist.  If I feel that the project does in anyway affect the therapeutic relationship with students, supervision is a safe place for me to talk through any concerns around this. My supervisor recently completed her PhD and she was happy to disclose how it wasn’t always an easy process and she is also a strong advocate of research and so I feel that she will be supportive on any emotional aspect for me.  References:  1). university of sheffield (no date) *(PDF) researcher self-care in emotionally demanding research: A ...* Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321707475\_Researcher\_Self-Care\_in\_Emotionally\_Demanding\_Research\_A\_Proposed\_Conceptual\_Framework (Accessed: 26 November 2023). |
| 1. **Does your project involve children or vulnerable adults e.g. a person with a learning disability?**   No |
| 1. **How will you store the information you gather from participants?**   I will keep all of the data initially in my work Microsoft office account, which is password protected, and it will be deleted at the end of the course before July 2024 and the anonymised data will remain in my report.  I will keep the data in my Microsoft office work email account and the notes I keep will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and converted into digital form and kept in word documents in my password protected one drive account.  I am very much a pencil and paper person when it comes to studying. I will collect the data in writing and then I will transfer to a word document and keep it in a folder on my UAL laptop which is password protected. I will then put the had written notes in the confidential waste. I will take data from my client notes and anonymise this as I write it down using a pen and paper. I will then type up my notes and keep them in the folder. When the PGCert is complete I will delete the folder on my laptop and only the anonymised data will remain in my report. The report will only be used in the context of the PGCert and will remain confidential within my team as a peer learning opportunity. I have decided to keep all of the data on my UAL laptop to conform with GDPR as that way I know that it is security protected. |
| **I confirm my responsibility to deliver the project in accordance with the Code of Practice on Research Ethics of the University of the Arts London (the University). In signing this form I am also confirming that:**   1. **The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.** 2. **I understand and accept that the ethical propriety of this project may be monitored by the relevant College Research body and/or the University’s Research Ethics Sub-Committee.** |
| Signed: ­­­\_ Date: 15/11/2023 |
| **I support this project and have** **reviewed it with the participant:**  Signed: Rachel Marsden. ­­­ Date: 27/11/23 |