Target audience: Research Master Students and PhD candidates
Academic year 2017 – 2018

Dates: Friday 13, 20 and 27 October from 11.00 - 13.30 hrs and
Tuesday 17 and 24 October from 14.30 - 17.00 hrs.

Coordinator: prof.dr. Doret J. de Ruyter
e-mail: d.j.de.ruyter@vu.nl
Lecturers: dr. Anders Schinkel & Doret J. de Ruyter
Credits: 3 EC
Costs: €375

The lecture room will be announced in due course

Introduction
At various stages in conducting research you will be confronted with ethical quandaries. At the
beginning of your research you will have to think about the problems you may face, which will be
described in your research proposal. Many PhD students in the Faculty of Behavioural and Movement
Sciences need to get approval of the METC and many ask the VCWE for approval before they (can)
begin with their research, for which they have to reflect on the way in which they involve human
subjects, but also on the way in which they will conduct a research with integrity. During the data
collection there might be challenges about transparency, subjects who (threaten to) drop out, data
storage. While analysing data, you’re always confronted with outliers and it might be that you discover
something interesting about a single item or one factor that has significance if reported about
separately, but not within the large database. And what if one of your outcomes challenges the results
of your supervisor or if it has a negative outcome for the company who’s paying for your research, the
institute in which you’re conducting your research or for the groups among which you conduct your
research? Finally, in writing and publishing the paper, the question arises who should be on the list of
authors. And of course, the question is: how many papers should one write per year? Can the pressure
of the system be detrimental to the integrity of researchers?
The research of most students involves empirical research with human subjects. As this is highly
challenging from an ethical perspective, we will pay attention to this more extensively. Legal
regulations, ethical codes of research organizations, faculties or universities are important (and strict)
guidelines that describe the duties of researchers and therefore are helpful in many cases. However, in
all research projects there will be moments at which ethical principles conflict or at which it is a
challenge to strictly conform to the rules of the ethical research codes. Particularly in research in which
groups are involved or in longitudinal studies the informed consent of participants may pose a
challenge or even threat to one’s research. And what if you find information in neurological or genetic
research that you were not looking for that is important but also devastating for the research subjects?
Course objectives

- Students know the central ethical principles underlying responsible conduct of research, particularly when human subjects are involved
- Students know the legal rules as well as the ethical codes of the VSNU, their professional organizations and the Faculty
- Students are able to evaluate research (plans) by means of the ethical principles
- Students are able to detect and reflect on ethical dilemmas in empirical research
- Students are able to work relatively autonomously from their supervisor and are able to stand up for themselves in a respectful (and effective) manner
- Students have the disposition to follow the ethical principles in their own research
- Students want to be responsible researchers and research with integrity

Type of Assessment

Type of Assessment(s):  Paper
Grading: Excellent, Good, sufficient, insufficient
Deadline for the assignment:  13 November 2017, 17 hrs.