ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY

Research Evidence & Academic Governance Policy

How ICPHAA members, accredited providers and the Association itself conduct research ethically, use evidence responsibly, and govern academic and research activity with integrity.

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EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY · ICPHAA-POL-16

Research Evidence & Academic Governance Policy

APPLIES TO	ICPHAA members who carry out or take part in research, accredited training providers and their students, and research, surveys or publications undertaken by ICPHAA.
VERSION	1.0 · effective 9 November 2026 · next review 9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors
CONTACT	ICPHAA Registry · admin@icphaa.ie

AT A GLANCE

- Research involving clients or other people requires informed, voluntary consent and appropriate ethical approval.
- Participants' confidentiality and personal data are protected under the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the GDPR.
- Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and undisclosed conflicts of interest are serious breaches of research integrity.
- Client material used in research, teaching or publication must be de-identified or used with consent.
- ICPHAA uses a broad range of evidence, from many therapeutic traditions, when setting its standards.

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1. Purpose

Research and evidence strengthen the counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare professions, inform good practice and help the public understand what therapy can offer. Research also carries particular ethical risks, because it often involves people who are vulnerable and information that is highly sensitive.

This policy sets out the standards that the Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA) expects whenever its members, accredited training providers or the Association itself carry out research, use client material for academic purposes, or rely on evidence to set professional standards. It also sets out how academic and research activity is governed, with clear accountability and management of conflicts of interest.

2. Scope and definitions

This policy applies to:

- ICPHAA members who design, carry out, supervise or take part in research, including practice-based research with their own clients;
- training providers with ICPHAA programme accreditation, in relation to student research, dissertations and case studies; and
- research, member surveys, evaluations and publications undertaken or commissioned by ICPHAA.

In this policy, **research** means systematic enquiry intended to generate knowledge that may be shared beyond the immediate therapeutic relationship, including published case studies. **Participant** means any person whose information, views or experiences are used in research, including clients, former clients, trainees and members.

3. Principles for research and use of evidence

Research and the use of evidence are guided by the same core principles as the ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and fidelity. In addition:

- **The participant's welfare comes first.** No research aim justifies harm to a participant or to the therapeutic relationship.
- **Breadth of evidence.** ICPHAA values many kinds of evidence, including quantitative, qualitative, practice-based and theoretical work, and respects the range of therapeutic traditions in which members train and practise.
- **Honesty.** Findings are reported truthfully, including their limitations, and are not overstated in publicity or marketing.
- **Inclusion.** Researchers consider whether their work includes, and fairly represents, people from diverse backgrounds, in line with the Association's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

4. Research ethics

Members and accredited providers who carry out research involving people must meet the following standards.

1. **Ethical review.** Research involving human participants receives approval from an appropriate research ethics committee, such as that of the university, college or health service under whose auspices it is carried out, before any participant is approached.
2. **Informed consent.** Participants receive clear, plain-language information about the purpose of the research, what taking part involves, any risks, how their information will be used and stored, and how results will be shared. Consent is recorded.
3. **Voluntary participation.** Participants can decline or withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any effect on the services they receive.
4. **Confidentiality and data protection.** Information is kept confidential, stored securely, anonymised or pseudonymised wherever possible, and processed in line with the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the GDPR. Health information is special category data and needs particular care.
5. **Minimising harm.** Researchers anticipate possible distress, have support information ready, and stop or pause where a participant becomes distressed.
6. **Safeguarding.** Research does not override safeguarding duties, including mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015 and the HSE National Safeguarding Policy for adults at risk. Participants are told about these limits to confidentiality before they consent.

5. Particular situations

Researching your own clients

Inviting one's own clients to take part in research creates a dual role and a risk of pressure, however unintended. Members should avoid it where possible. Where it is necessary, the research must be discussed in supervision, approved by an ethics committee, and arranged so that the client can decline freely, ideally with consent sought by someone other than the therapist. The client's therapy always takes priority.

Children and adults whose capacity may be affected

Research involving children requires parental or guardian consent and the child's own assent appropriate to their age and understanding. Research involving adults whose decision-making capacity may be affected must respect the principles of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, supporting people to make their own decisions wherever possible.

Case studies and publications

Client material used in a case study, dissertation, presentation or publication must either be de-identified so thoroughly that neither the client nor anyone who knows them could recognise it, or be used only with the client's informed written consent. Changing names alone is rarely enough.

Research data and results

Research data are stored securely, with access limited to the research team, and kept only for as long as the approved research protocol and data protection law allow. Identifiable data are separated from research data wherever possible and destroyed securely when no longer needed. Participants are told how they can learn about the results, and findings are shared in a form that does not identify anyone.

Online and digital research

Research using online surveys, recorded sessions, social media or digital platforms raises additional privacy risks. Researchers should choose platforms that meet data protection requirements, tell participants where their data will be stored, and avoid collecting more personal information than the research needs, in line with the Digital & Practice Environment Policy.

6. Research integrity

Research must be honest and transparent at every stage. The following are serious breaches of research integrity:

- fabrication or falsification of data, client material or results;
- plagiarism, including presenting the work of others, or text generated by AI tools, as one's own without acknowledgement;
- failing to declare funding, commercial interests or other conflicts of interest connected with the research;
- misrepresenting authorship or contributions; and
- misusing ICPHAA's name or logo to suggest endorsement of research the Association has not endorsed.

Members who use or cite research in their practice, teaching or marketing should do so accurately and should not claim that research proves more than it does.

7. Academic governance

Good governance of academic and research activity rests on clear accountability and the careful management of conflicts of interest.

- **Accredited providers** must have a documented process for approving and supervising student research, including ethical review proportionate to risk, competent research supervision, and fair assessment with internal moderation and external examination.
- **ICPHAA research and surveys** are approved by the ICPHAA Board of Directors or a person it nominates. Member surveys explain their purpose, are voluntary, and report results in anonymised or aggregate form.
- **Conflicts of interest.** Anyone with a personal, professional or financial interest in research being considered by ICPHAA declares it and takes no part in decisions about it, in line with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

- **Using evidence in standards.** When ICPHAA sets or reviews standards, the Accreditation Department, led by the Accreditation Manager, considers relevant research and practice evidence and records how it has been taken into account. ICPHAA does not endorse particular commercial products or proprietary methods on the basis of research claims.

8. Responsibilities

Members

- Obtain ethical approval and informed consent, protect participants' data, and discuss research plans in supervision.
- Report findings honestly and declare interests.

Accredited training providers

- Maintain research ethics, supervision and integrity procedures for students, and teach research ethics as part of the curriculum.

ICPHAA

- Conduct its own surveys and research ethically and transparently.
- Use evidence responsibly and openly when setting standards.

9. Breaches, monitoring and review

Concerns about research conduct by an ICPHAA member, including a concern raised by a participant, can be made to the ICPHAA Registry at admin@icphaa.ie and are handled under the Complaints Procedures and, where relevant, the Fitness to Practise Policy and the Disciplinary Procedures. Concerns about student research are normally raised first with the training provider.

The ICPHAA Board of Directors owns this policy. It is reviewed by the review date shown in the document control table, and sooner if law, research ethics guidance, statutory regulation or professional practice changes. Suggestions for improvement are welcome at admin@icphaa.ie.

READ ALONGSIDE

- ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members
- Confidentiality Policy
- Legal & Data Governance Policy
- Education & Governance Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Safeguarding & Duty of Care Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED BY
1.0	9 November 2026	Reissued in the ICPHAA policy framework (replaces the former ICPA version).	ICPHAA Board of Directors

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