

Standard Operating Procedure

Research Ethics



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CELL

Version: 1.0

NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

This SOP contains 05 pages and has been prepared in line with the provisions of GEP-HEC guidelines and will remain enforced till amended, cancelled or suspended. It shall be revised/ amended after any changes in the GEP-2023 by HEC or after the statutory bodies' decision concerning Research Ethics as and when considered necessary by the President NDU. No provision of this document shall supersede information/ direction contained in GEP-2023 or other superior documents on the subject.

Record of Approvals

Ver	Approval Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority	Revision Details
1.0	-----	-----	President NDU	New devised

Abbreviations

FCS	Faculty of Contemporary Studies
Fol	Following
Gen	General
HoD	Head of Department
NDU	National Defence University
QEC	Quality Enhancement Cell
Req	Required
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UERC	University Examination and Research Committee

SOP: RESEARCH ETHICS

1. **Gen:** It is vital to have an adequately regulated process in research phase where ethics in whole research should be properly monitored.

2. **Aim¹:** This SOP is devised to lay down guidelines to respect/protect the dignity, rights and welfare of all those involved in research (*whether they are participants, third parties or staff and students*) and to promote high ethical standards of research. To monitor ethics in research in every phase and provide guidance to minimize the potential risks of harm to human participants, researchers, institutions, community, environment, society, avoid academic misconduct and avoid deceptive practices.

3. **Scope¹:** This SOP applies to NDU students and employees who conduct research. Third parties (*for example staff of other institutions working with NDU students/employees or on University premises*) are expected to adhere to the University's ethical standards of research conduct.

4. **Composition.** To ensure the high ethical standards and merit of research, fol will be the composition of "NDU Research Ethics Committee": -

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|---|-------------|
| a. | Dean FCS | : | Chairperson |
| b. | All HoDs | : | Member |
| c. | Registrar | : | Member |
| d. | Dir QEC | : | Member |

Note: *The committee will meet once in a year (or case to case basis).*

5. **Roles and Responsibilities of NDU Research Ethics Committee (REC):**

Fol will be the roles and responsibilities of the REC: -

- a. All members of the University are individually responsible for ensuring that their work is conducted in accordance with the research commitments set out in this SOP. Failure to comply with this policy may lead to the failure of assessed work; the suspension of study, research projects, and/ or funding from research sponsors; or to the inability to publish. Work conducted in deliberate contravention of the decisions of Research Ethics Committee, or with deliberate disregard for the ethics

¹ Research Ethics Policy-University of Oxford
(<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/policyontheethicalconductofresearchinvolvinghumanparticipantsandpersonaldatapdf>)

review process, would not be covered by the University's indemnity arrangements.

- b. The Registrar, reporting to the President NDU, is the University's chief administrative officer and, as such, has overall responsibility for ethical conduct in the University and for the University's compliance with government policy and legislation.
- c. This Policy is managed and monitored by the NDU Research Ethics Committee (*para 4/N*), which may decide to develop additional guidance or policies as code of practices across the Pakistan and the worldwide research landscape evolve.
- d. REC has overall responsibility for the University's Research Ethics review process. Recommends changes to this policy, its remit as set out in the University's regulations.
- e. Heads of Department, as senior academic leaders within the University, are responsible for promoting the highest ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of research. As one component of this, Heads of Departments are responsible for ensuring their staff and students observe this SOP and for the effective local oversight of departmental research activity, including endorsement of applications submitted to REC for ethics review.
- f. The University expects all those (Faculty, Staff & Students) involved in research involving human participants, personal data and /or regulated material and procedures, whether as staff or students, to take personal responsibility for familiarizing themselves with the SOPs, professional frameworks, standards, obligations, and relevant legislation that apply to their research, and for keeping such knowledge current. Research supervisors should assist their students in becoming familiar with this and other University policies and procedures relevant to the conduct of the student's project, and provide, or direct the student to, specific advice, training, and guidance.
- g. REC will meet once in a year (*but frequency may vary on case to case basis/keeping in view the emergent need*).
- h. REC will guide the researcher on ethical principles during the conduct of research as & when req.
- i. REC will ensure that there must be no physical, emotional and psychological risk to participants and concerned institutions (NDU or

others). If there found any risks, committee will guide/ supervise the researcher through formal training on 'avoidance of Ethical Issues'. The goal of this training will be the foundational awareness about ethical issues involved in research to reduce and resolve as many, and ideally all, of the identified ethical issues as possible.

- j. REC will regularly monitor the research to ensure ethical compliance during the conduct of research.
- k. The University requires all its faculty, staff and students to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of their research.

6. **Principles of Research Ethics²**: Consideration of ethical issues and following the correct principles of ethical research is an important part of any research. Ethical principles guide and underpin the proper conduct of research. Some of the principles of research ethics that various codes address are as under: -

- a. **Honesty.** Strive for honesty in whole process. Honestly report data, results, methods and procedures. Do not fake or misrepresent the data. Provide factual evidences.
- b. **Trust.** Honor commitment.
- c. **Objectivity.** To avoid bias in data analysis, data interpretation, peer review, personnel decisions, grant writing and other aspects of research where objectivity is required. Avoid or minimize bias or self-deception. Disclose personal or financial interests that may affect research.
- d. **Integrity.** Act with sincerity; strive for consistency of thought and action.
- e. **Carefulness.** Keep good records of research activities, such as data collection, research design, and correspondence.
- f. **Openness.** Be open to criticism and new ideas.
- g. **Transparency.** Disclose methods, materials, assumptions, analyses, and other information needed to evaluate your research.
- h. **Intellectual Property.** Never plagiarize.
- i. **Responsibility.** Follow institutional rules and conduct codes.
- j. **Courage.** Researchers to collaborate, share information, and circulate new ideas freely, without fear.

² National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (December 23, 2020)
(<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis/index.cfm>)

- k. **Legality.** Obey relevant laws and institutional and governmental policies.
- l. **Human Subjects Protection.** When conducting research on human subjects, minimize harms and risks and maximize benefits; respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy; strive to distribute the benefits and burdens of research fairly.

7. **Ethical Review Process:**³

- a. Concerned supervisors are individually responsible for monitoring that the research is conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of NDU.
- b. All research projects within the University must be checked for their ethical implications before the research takes place.
- c. Ethical reviews are undertaken by concerned supervisor. However, should significant ethical issues be raised by the research, including research characterized by one or more of the following features such as:
 - (1) Research involving deception of participants, or which is conducted without their full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out or when the data is gathered, or which involves the use of confidential information.
 - (2) Research involving more than minimal risk of harm to participants, such as: research involving vulnerable groups.
 - (3) Research involving personally intrusive or ethically sensitive topics.
 - (4) Research which would induce unacceptable psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
 - (5) Research which covers security-sensitive subject and material.
 - (6) External obligations require it.
 - (7) Research undertaken by a student or member of staff who has not received appropriate training or has insufficient experience in research ethics and has been unable to access appropriate advice or support.

³ Research Ethics Policy and Procedures of University of London
(<https://www.london.ac.uk/sites/default/files/stay-central/uol-research-ethics-policy.pdf>)

- (8) Research that is undertaken, on behalf of the student/research, not by the student/researcher himself/herself, but by a third party not associated with the University.

Ethical approval will need to be sought from UERC.

8. Penalties⁴:

- a. The PhD researcher/degree holder and his supervisor will be penalized as per the provisions of the Anti-Plagiarism Policy of the HEC.
- b. Supervisor may be banned from supervising the new PhD researchers for a maximum of 05 years.

9. Appeals:

- a. Where a Researcher has a concern about the decision of the UERC to withhold, suspend or withdraw ethical approval of their research/study, they should contact with the Chair of REC.
- b. The appeal is to be made to REC Chair.
- c. Appeals will only be permitted on the ground; that researcher possesses new evidence that was not available at the time the UERC made its decision and it has subsequently refused to consider such evidence.
- d. Upon receiving the appeal request, REC Chair will review request and confirm that it has been received within one week. The Chair will then refer appeal to REC, whose decision would be expected to take two weeks.
- e. The decision of REC will be communicated to complainant.

10. This issues with the approval of President NDU and shall come into force with immediate effect.

Dir QEC
(Dr Farrukh Idrees)

⁴ ANTI-PLAGIARISM POLICY OF HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION 2023 – Version 2.0
(<https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/policies/Documents/Plagiarism-Policy.pdf>)