

Research Ethics Policy



**Office of Research Innovation and
Commercialization (ORIC)**

Nishtar Medical University (NMU), Multan

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1) Introduction

This ethics policy forms a basis for the requirements and implementation for ethical review of all research activity at the Nishtar Medical University, Multan (hereinafter referred to as NMU). Research integrity is a core value in evolution of knowledge and is essential aspect of research at the University and a main part of a trustworthy research culture. NMU is fully committed to ensuring good conduct of all research undertaken by its staff/faculty/students through its engagement with external research collaborators and stakeholders. High professional standards and integrity are of central importance to our commitment to research, and it is the responsibility of all faculty members and students engaged in research activity to maintain them. Researchers in the University are duty bound to society, their profession, the University and the funding agencies of their research to accept responsibility for their own conduct of research and practice, the activities of staff and students researching under their supervision, and for making best efforts to provide value for public or private funds invested in their research.

The Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (hereinafter referred to as ORIC) has been set up at NMU under the guidelines given by the Higher Education Commission. ORIC is mandated to facilitate high-quality research process in the University and its commercialization. ORIC deals with research training (students and faculty), planning, execution, support, IPRs, technology transfer to develop industry-academia linkages and to provide an appropriate mechanism for the process of commercialization.

2) Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Director ORIC has set up an independent Institutional Review Board (hereinafter referred to as IRB) of the University to ensure compliance with ethical standards, legal aspects and professional standards in research process undertaken at NMU. At present, IRB comprises a group of the professionals having diverse background including faculty, legal, administrative, community and religious. and is headed by Prof. Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani (Prof. of Gynecology & Obstetrics, and Pro Vice Chancellor, NMU).

- I. IRB shall be formed by the recommendations of Director ORIC which shall include the Chairperson, 05 clinical Members and 01 basic sciences, one legal, one religious

scholar, one nursing member, Manager Research, ORIC and Registrar of NMU and the same shall be approved by the worthy Vice Chancellor.

- II. The term of office of the committee shall be three (03) years.

2.1 Mandate of Institutional Review Board (IRB)

IRB is mandated to monitor ethical compliance and ensure that the research process is according to ethical requirements. The general role of IRB is:

- I. To promote a culture of research ethics in research practices at NMU.
- II. To advise ORIC for training and other activities to build capacity for research ethics at NMU.
- III. To serve as ethics monitoring and compliance authority for all research at NMU.

3) Objective

The objective is to develop a culture of ethics, integrity and academic honesty in the research process and undertakings of NMU, and to guide researchers, build ethical capacity and ensure compliance accordingly.

4) Scope

The scope of the policy is to provide facilitation to students, staff, and faculty of NMU for maintaining high standards of ethics in their research process.

5) Research Principles

The University Research Ethics Policy is based upon widely accepted principles and practices governing research participants, as follows;

- I. Minimal risk of harm to participants and researchers.
- II. The potential for the benefit to society.
- III. Preserving the dignity of participants.
- IV. Minimal risk of harm to the environment.
- V. Voluntary informed consent by participants, or special safeguards where this is not possible.
- VI. Integrity
- VII. Honesty
- VIII. Transparency in declaring funding sources.

- IX. Confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents.
- X. Appropriate publication and dissemination of research results.

6) Research Ethics Policy

Coverage

- I. Research Ethics Policy covers all the research undertakings of NMU and external collaborators of NMU who complete any research with NMU students/faculty/staff, including surveys, observations, focus groups, lab experiments, field trials, human and animal interventions and other forms of investigation.
- II. The policy covers research activity undertaken at NMU and its affiliate colleges by the staff, students, faculty and other persons.
- III. The policy covers research undertaking which interacts with humans, animals, and objects of NMU, other organizations, city, state, country, and stakeholders involved in research.
- IV. All types of research projects/consultancies etc. should be channelled through ORIC NMU.

Principles

a)

- I. No harmful effect is to be allowed in any kind of research intervention on human, animal and public property.
- II. No risk or damage to physical, mental, emotional, financial or any other form is to be permitted in any kind of research undertaking.
- III. No research undertaking is permitted causing loss of public property, damage to the environment and involving any hazardous activity for people and animals.
- IV. Personal identity of participants, respondents, observed people and others taking part in research must not be disclosed or published without consent.

- V. Integrity and honesty with humans, animals, public property and institutional research must be observed on priority.
- VI. Impartiality and nonbiased approach must be observed in the case of ethnicity, religious values, gender and specific groups of people and society.
- VI. No element of force is to be allowed to coerce persons to take part in research.
- VI. Consent of participation and understanding of research activity is mandatory.

b)

- I. Obtaining of prior consent is a prerequisite for any research process from the participants in research.
- II. Clear explanation of predictable risks and associated benefits is required and must be agreed upon voluntarily by participants for research.
- III. Obtaining of prior consent is a prerequisite for any research process from the owner/caretaker of animals and public properties selected for research.
- IV. Informed consent is a prerequisite for any research process from the caretaker of children, people with disability, or anyone/anything involved in research, with no ability to provide informed consent.
- V. Permission is required if humans and animals of other collaborative institutions are involved.

c)

- I. Plagiarism report is a prerequisite for any kind of research approval and must be submitted.
- II. Approval of Institutional Review Board (IRB) is mandatory at the stage of final submission regarding compliance to research ethics.
- III. All research activities carried out at NMU must be registered/reported to ORIC.
- IV. Research supervisor/project head assumes the responsibility of ethical compliance and guidance during the research process.

Legal Aspects

- I. Research ethics policy does not cover any thing prohibited in the prevailing laws of Pakistan.

- l Research ethics policy and permission of the committee do not cover permission of humans and animals involved by collaborative institutions.
- l The research ethics policy and all the approvals of the committee are in accordance with the university's rules and regulations.
- M. The researcher is under obligation to abide by the law of state and country.
- V. The researcher is under obligation to abide by the rules and regulation of collaborative partners involved in research.

Contingencies

- l The research ethics policy and permission of the committee do not cover any commitment made by the researcher.
- l Any dispute that arises between the researcher and the committee may be referred to Director ORIC or a subcommittee formed for dispute resolution.
- l Any dispute that arises between the researcher and the collaborators/participants/third party may be referred to IRB.
- M. The researcher bears the sole responsibility for abiding by generally accepted principles and practices of research ethics.
- V. The notified head of Institutional Review Board needs to be approached through submission of official form (**attached herewith as Annexure "A"**).

Human-Related Research (Definition)

All human-related research which includes one or more of the following requires ethical assessment and approval at the appropriate level:

- l Direct involvement through physically invasive procedures, such as the taking of blood samples
- l Direct involvement through non-invasive procedures, such as laboratory-based experiments, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, observations.
- l Indirect involvement through access to personal information and/or tissue
- M. Involvement requiring consent on behalf of others, such as by parents for a child participant

Vulnerable Participants

Some participants may be particularly vulnerable to harm and may require special safeguards for their welfare. In general, it may be inappropriate for undergraduates to undertake research projects involving such participants.

Particularly vulnerable participants might be:

- I. Infants and children under the age of eighteen
- II. People with physiological and/or psychological impairments and/or learning difficulties.
- III. People in poverty
- IV. Relatives of sick, or recently deceased people
- V. People with only a basic/elementary knowledge of the language of the researcher
- VI. Minorities
- VII. Females
- VIII. Prisoners

The Legal Framework, the Role of Professional Associations, and Research Councils

All the research projects, academic, industrial or otherwise, must meet the legal requirements of Pakistani and international laws and statutory regulations.

Researchers in each specific discipline should comply with any research ethics guidelines set out by their professional associations.

Research Councils, charitable trusts and other research funding bodies in most cases require an undertaking from grant applicants that research proposals involving human participants have been approved by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Plagiarism

NMU shall not permit any sort of plagiarism from students/faculty researchers. The Plagiarism Report from Turnitin must be submitted and similarity index must be below the acceptance level given by HEC. **HEC's Plagiarism policy is attached herewith as Annexure "B"**

In the case of infringement of Ethics Policy, specific sanctions will be imposed, depending on NMU's BASAR decision, ranging from financial penalties to temporary suspension or expulsion.

HEC's Plagiarism policy must be adhered to letter and spirit.

Following are some major points discussed in plagiarism policy:

- I. Improper citation without dishonest intent.
- II. Citing a source that does not exist.
- III. Signing in for another author.
- IV. Copying or using unauthorised materials, devices, or collaboration.
- V. Falsifying evidence or data or other source materials, including falsification by selectively omitting or altering data that do not support one's claims or conclusions.
- VI. Intentionally destroying or obstructing another researcher's work.
- VII. Knowingly violating research or professional ethics.
- VIII. Submitting as one's own work a text largely or wholly written by another person(s).
- IX. Copying or paraphrasing substantial sections from one or more works of other authors into one's own text, without attribution, that is, omitting any reference to the work(s) either in the body of the text, in footnotes, or in the bibliography/reference list.
- X. Paraphrase of a substantial section or several smaller sections of another text(s) without any reference in the body text, but the work is included in the bibliography/reference list.
- XI. Copying/verbatim two or three not necessarily consecutive phrases, or one or two not necessarily consecutive sentences, from the work of others without attribution.
- XII. Copying/verbatim one substantial or several smaller sections from another text without quotation marks but with the reference provided within the student's text.
- XIII. Submitting without permission one's own work that has been largely or wholly submitted for credit to another course.
- XIV. The ratio of Turnitin similarity index would not be the only indicator of Plagiarism. However, it would be the responsibility of the supervisor to check the plagiarism beyond the Turnitin / any other standard similarity checking software report.

Plagiarism and Poor Scholarship

- I Summarising an author's ideas at length but only mentioning the author or the source at the end of the paragraph.
- II Mentioning an author with an appropriate citation in an earlier sentence but no attribution in subsequent sentences, so that it is unclear whether the author's ideas are continuing or the writer's own comments are being offered.
- III Including a correctly referenced short fragment from another text but without quotation marks
- IV Using an author's work with incomplete reference e.g. page number is missing, or the work appears only in a footnote/parenthesis and is missing from the reference list.

Measures to be taken in Cases Confirmed as Plagiarism

- I. An oral or written reprimand
- II. Receive a written reprimand
- III. Financial punitive measure
- IV. Contract with NMU ceases

*** University decision will be binding in case any dispute arises between the researcher and NMU.**

Annexure A: Research Ethics Approval Form:

<https://www.NMU.edu.pk/oric/Downloads.aspx>

Annexure B: HEC Plagiarism Policy:

<http://hec.gov.pk/english/services/faculty/Documents/Plagiarism/Plagiarism%20Policy.pdf>