

# Research Management Cell

## Code of Practice for Research Ethics



## Gupteshwor Mahadev Multiple Campus (GMMC)

Tribhuvan University

Chhorepatan, Pokhara -17

Nepal

# Code of Practice for Research Ethics

## 1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1. The development and implementation of this Code is in response to increasing expectations within the higher education sector and, on a broader level, academia across the world, concerning research governance, ethical practice and general probity in research. Our Campus has a responsibility to act in accordance with the expectations of key stakeholders, such as professional organisations and funding agencies such as the UGC, Nepal. These expectations are applicable not only to faculties, but also to students, who our Campus has a responsibility to train in ethical standards at a general level, but also in areas relevant to their specific academic discipline.
- 1.2. Thus the intention of this Code is to promote the highest standards of ethical conduct in research involving human participants. This Code also outlines the expectations and standards around research ethics in place at our Campus, and provides assurances to participants, stakeholders and associated organisations that the rights and welfare of those involved in our research are of paramount concern.
- 1.3. The guiding principles of this Code of Research Ethics are those used classically in Research Ethics and demonstrate a systematic regard for the rights and interests of others in the full range of academic relationships and activities. Namely:
  - 1.3.1. non-maleficence; the principle of not doing, or not permitting, official misconduct. It is the principle of doing no harm in the widest sense.
  - 1.3.2. beneficence is the requirement to serve the interests and well-being of others, including respect for their rights. It is the principle of doing good in the widest sense.
  - 1.3.3. those proposed in the UGC ethical guidelines namely:
    - Honesty in all aspects of research
    - Accountability in the conduct of research
    - Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others
    - Good stewardship of research on behalf of others as a global guide to the responsible conduct of research
- 1.4. All forms of research undertaken by the students and faculties of our Campus, wherever it takes place, must be carried out in accordance with the UGC ethical guidelines and all other relevant professional and legal standards, or codes of conduct. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of rigour and

integrity in all aspects of our research, the core elements are outlined below:

- **Honesty in:** all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; reporting on research methods and procedures; gathering and analysing data; using and acknowledging the work of other authors and researchers appropriately; and in communicating valid observations, interpretations and conclusions based on sound research findings that lead to justifiable claims.
- **Rigour in:** conducting the research in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards: performing research and using appropriate methods and techniques; adhering to the standards of this Code and also external legal and professional requirements; adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and in communicating the results.
- **Transparency and open communication in:** recognising and declaring conflicts of interest; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data and findings; in making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and in presenting the work to other researchers and, on a broader level, to the general public.
- **Care and respect for:** all participants in, and subjects of, research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.

**1.5.** We are also committed to ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards. This Code is also thus informed by the standards and principles of a range of organisations throughout the Nepal who hold a vested interest in the quality of our Campus's research output.

**1.6.** Non-compliance with this code will constitute research misconduct and be subject to the Campus's appropriate procedures.

## **2. Policy**

All research undertaken by staff and students under the aegis of the Campus should only be undertaken after effective consideration of its ethical implications with full regard to the Campus's Code of Practice on Research Ethics and related documents.

## **3. Definitions Used in this Code**

**3.1.** For the purposes of this Code, the definition of ‘research’ is that used in the UGC guidelines.

**3.2.** Similarly, our definition of research participants is based on that used by the UGC guidelines.

#### **4. The purpose of this Code.**

**4.1.** The primary purpose of this Code is to guide staff or students of our Campus in being able to assure others that all their research activity:

**4.1.1.** Is subject to rigorous ethical oversight and approval, as detailed in the Campus’s Research Ethics Governance and Guidance Manual,

**4.1.2.** Follows the expectations of this Code and that all legal and regulatory requirements, including Nepalese legislation and the standards of UGC, are met.

**4.2.** The standards and expectations of this Code are designed in such a way that awareness and adherence to its principles are paramount for all research conducted on behalf of, or involving, our Campus.

**4.3.** Underpinning every standard and expectation outlined in this Code, are the fundamental consideration of the risks of harm in conducting the research, carefully measured against potential benefits. It must be the primary concern of those planning or preparing for research to ensure the risk of harm to participants and researchers is avoided or minimised in all instances, and that where a risk of harm is identified, and justifiable against the benefits, that the risk is assiduously controlled and monitored.

**4.4.** Fundamental to this code is the respect for the autonomous nature of human participants in research and the protection of their rights, especially, but not limited to, issues of: voluntary informed consent, freedom from any form of coercion; the right to withdraw from research; maintaining confidentiality and protecting of their personal data against loss or misuse.

**4.5.** This Code will also protect against harm, or adverse consequences, to the research staff and students of the Campus, and others acting under their instructions, in addition to participants.

#### **5. Governance and Responsibilities**

**5.1. Campus Academic Board:** The primary oversight of all matters relating to

research ethics and research governance within the Campus rests with Academic Board, which devolves operational ownership of this function to Campus Research Management Cell (RMC). The Academic Board will have the following responsibilities:

**5.1.1.** In line with the commitment to Support Research Integrity to be assured, through a process of regular review and approval, that the procedures and practices that the Campus have in place for monitoring and approval of research ethics are robust such that the campus is compliant with the all other legal and professional requirement for ethics.

**5.1.2.** To receive and approve a short annual statement:

- provides a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews);
- provides assurances that the processes they have in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct relating to ethics and integrity are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organization;
- provides a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct including that relating to ethics that have been undertaken;

**5.1.3.** To receive an annual summary report each year of the activities of the previous years of all the various Ethics committees, to include details of decisions made, training delivered/received, changes in committee membership, etc.

**5.1.4.** To ensure that all other Campus processes allow for appropriate and timely review of ethical matters related to research in our taught and research programmes and also those involved in research funding processes.

**5.1.5.** To receive, and consider for approval, any recommendations for changes to the Campus's research ethics and integrity system and procedure

**5.2. Individual Staff Researchers:** These have the following responsibilities:

**5.2.1.** To meet the expectations of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity by:

- understanding the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research;
- maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in their work at all times;

- complying with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders.
- ensuring that all research is subject to active and appropriate consideration of ethical issues.
- ensuring that, if ethical issue are identified in any research that they are involved in, that it is subject to appropriate review by relevant Ethics Committee(s).

**5.2.2.** To meet the above by continuous updating and familiarization of their own understanding and practice by self-directed or organized reading/training, pro-actively taking advantage of training and support offered by the Campus or elsewhere.

**5.2.3.** To consider the ethics of any proposed research project at the earliest opportunity in the design of the project.

**5.2.4.** Make every effort to find a way to answer their research question that puts the smallest number of participants at the smallest possible risk (i.e. 'minimised and reasonable'), without putting the integrity of the work in doubt, e.g. without compromising the statistical power or relevance of the study.

**5.2.5.** To ensure that commercial, or any other conflicts of interest are clearly declared and taken into account as appropriate.

**5.3. Research Student Supervisors:** In addition to those of individual staff researchers, these have the following responsibilities.

**5.3.1.** Make the students they supervise familiar with, and have procedures that conform to the relevant Campus, professional and legal ethics matters relevant to their research as stated in this Code.

**5.3.2.** Train and support their students where required to enable them to achieve their responsibilities under this Code.

**5.3.3.** Ensure that their overarching concerns are of the progress and development of the student as an independent and ethical researcher

**5.3.4.** To clearly declare any commercial or any other conflicts of interest and to ensure that these taken into account.

**5.3.5.** Ensure that requests for ethical approval are made in a timely manner, allowing for consideration of any feedback and resubmission, such that the progress and research of the student is minimally affected.

**5.3.6.** Ensure that their students or their research have obtained appropriate ethical approval before any of their research begins.

5.3.7. To keep appropriate records of ethics submissions and approval.

**5.4. Research Students:** These have the following responsibilities:

5.4.1. To ensure that they are familiar with relevant Campus, professional and legal ethics matters relevant to their research, including this Code, and that they conform to such.

5.4.2. To ensure that they identify with their supervisor any support required to achieve and that engage in obligatory and other training in ethics and integrity.

5.4.3. To obtain appropriate ethical approval before any of their research is begun and that such applications are made in a timely fashion and in accordance with campus's expectations and deadlines.

5.4.4. To keep appropriate copies of all correspondence and letters of approval from RMC, external ethics committees or other partners for inclusion in their theses submission.

5.4.5. To clearly declare any commercial or any other conflicts of interest and to ensure that these taken into account.

5.4.6. To comply with all conditions.

**5.5. Staff who deliver Undergraduate or taught post-graduate programmes that contain a research element have the responsibility:**

5.5.1. To ensure that documents and other forms of correct advice on ethics are provided to students on their programme.

5.5.2. To design programmes in such a way as to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration and approval of ethical issues through Campus and Campus process, allowing for changes that may be required for ethical approval, such that progression of the student is not adversely affected.

5.5.3. To ensure that all student research that needs ethical approval is submitted to to the committee as appropriate.

5.5.4. To inform all students with research projects or internships requiring ethical approval that they must not begin any research without formal ethical approval.

5.5.5. To keep appropriate records of ethics submissions and approval.

5.5.6. To monitor student compliance to the conditions.