

CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCHERS¹

1.0 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines seek to establish an agreed, consistent and unambiguous framework for promoting and implementing good ethical practice in the conduct of academic research. The Faculty wishes to promote a quality research culture, where excellence is promoted and key elements such as openness, accountability and honesty, are maintained and enhanced. The guidelines are of direct relevance to all those who host, conduct, participate and disseminate the results of research.

2.0 AIMS OF THE GUIDELINES

The Research Ethics Guidelines are intended to:

(a) To encourage researchers to adhere to best practices relating to the ethical development, implementation and dissemination of research

Researchers should be aware that all research carried out should be of the highest ethical standards possible, that it complies with all relevant laws including, where appropriate, laws of other countries; appropriate due diligence is undertaken to minimise risk; and finally, that it adheres to all relevant policies or codes of good practice.

(b) To protect the integrity and reputation of the University

The Faculty of Education and Social Sciences wishes all research to be in the best interests of the University and its reputation. The Faculty has a clear responsibility to develop a culture among staff, researchers and students in which attention to both governance and ethics in research becomes accepted practice.

The Faculty has a duty of care toward members of its community and also toward members of the general community where the Faculty's activities impact upon them. The

¹ 'Researchers' refers to staff in the faculty and the rest of CPUT, students and outside researchers who wish to conduct research that involves the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences community.

Faculty has a responsibility to encourage the highest possible standards of care, consideration and integrity within all research. Research integrity extends to accountability for the ethical basis for all aspects of the research; for the safety of both the participants and the researchers; for the probity of the financial management of the project; for the reliability of results and for making every best effort to provide value for public or private funds invested in the project.

(c) To protect the rights of the participants

All research should be governed by a set of fundamental ethical principles to ensure the protection of all participants and to clarify the conditions under which research is acceptable. The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants must be the primary consideration in any research study. It is the responsibility of individual researchers to ensure that their research does not cause unnecessary harm to participants, stakeholders, the environment, the economy and other living beings.

(d) To protect the rights of fellow researchers

These guidelines seek to encourage the internal sharing of ideas, methods and research results and to encourage collaboration between researchers, research groups, research disciplines and institutions. Researchers need to have mutual respect for one another and duly acknowledge the input of each individual.

3.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

(a) Consideration should be given to the impact of Research on Society

The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence are fundamental to all research activity. Beneficence is the requirement to promote the interests and well being of others. It is the ethical principle of ‘doing good’ in the widest sense. Non-maleficence is the principle of ‘not doing harm’. Both principles must be applied to all entities directly or indirectly affected by the research.

Researchers have a moral obligation to attempt to minimise the risk of physical and/or mental harm to themselves, human and animal participants and the environment which may result from their research.

(b) Researchers shall give consideration to the value of their research

It is essential that existing sources of research within the same area are considered carefully prior to any research being undertaken. Research that knowingly duplicates other work unnecessarily or which is not of sufficient quality to contribute to existing knowledge is, in itself, unethical.

(c) Conflict of interest

Consideration should be given to potential conflicts of interest that may arise given the source of research funding and the nature of the research project. All funds shall be managed in accordance with the University's financial guidelines.

(d) Informed consent *shall be* acquired before any research is undertaken

Before commencing any activities involving the participation of human subjects the researcher should consider whose consent it is necessary and appropriate to seek. Such consent must be informed. This is achieved by providing the intended participant with a comprehensible explanation of:

- possible hazards of the activities
- the right to decline participation
- the right to withdraw from the activity at any time
- the right to have privacy and confidentiality protected
- the right to turn off a recording device at any time
- the right to ask questions at any time
- the right to receive information about the outcome of the activity in an appropriate form

Participants should not be forced into participating in the research and should not be offered inducements which may lead them to make decisions prejudicial to their welfare. Consideration should be given as to whether legitimate incentives could influence the

results of research. The use of payments to respondents must consequently be subject to ethical scrutiny. However, participants' expenses, for example travelling, should be reimbursed.

Informed Consent is usually obtained in writing from participants after they have been given information about the research and have time to consider the implications of granting consent (**Appendix I**).

(e) Participants shall be fully aware of the aims of the research, what it entails and any other information which is deemed as relevant

As a general rule, potential participants have the right to receive clear and detailed information about what the research entails in advance. This should be explained on an information sheet set out in an appropriate language, and participants should be given plenty of time to study this sheet and ask any questions.

Information that would be likely to affect a participant's willingness to participate should not be deliberately withheld, since this would remove from participants an important means of protecting their own interests.

Where there are legitimate reasons not to fully inform participants prior approval must be sought from the Faculty Research and Ethics Committees.

(f) Participants have the right to confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' confidentiality shall be maintained at all times. The identity or any information that collectively might reveal the identity of a participant should not be released without prior consent. Procedures should be followed for protecting confidentiality and anonymity of participants and may include:

- using unique identifiers instead of names
- storing all data in a locked file
- using pseudonyms for all participants
- carefully disposing of all information that can identify a participant
- securing confidentiality statements from all researchers

– destroying audio and video tapes on completion of research, or as appropriate to the circumstances, (transcripts should be kept).

There may be exemptions to this principle when demonstrating the authenticity of raw data or results.

Research data and methods of analysis should be transparent and open to scrutiny without prejudicing participants' rights to confidentiality and anonymity.

(g) Publication of research findings

It is required that the researcher disseminates and publishes all research findings, unless major confidentiality issues arise and subject to the guidelines in sub-section (f) above or contractual provisions.

When publishing research all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that published reports, statistics and public statements about research activities and performance are complete, accurate and unambiguous. The nature of financial support must be acknowledged in all reports of research outcomes, both to acknowledge the support and to enable readers to make their own judgement over any prejudicial influences the financial support may have had upon the direction of the research.

The Faculty is committed to pushing the boundaries of research in order to advance human knowledge but, at the same time, to benefit humankind. Therefore, researchers should be aware of the use, potential misuse and abuse of research data that is published.

All researchers who have contributed to the development of results and dissemination should be appropriately acknowledged.

Where research findings have commercial potential, consideration should be given to appropriate forms of protection prior to publication.

4.0 RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW MECHANISM

This applies to staff and non-CPUT community members, Doctoral, Masters and Honours students conducting substantial research as the basis for an original thesis. Non-CPUT community members conducting research that involves students and/or staff as their research participants should in addition comply with the requirements of the Institution's Ethics Review Board (Appendix III). These guidelines require that researchers, in the presentation of their project proposals, must address issues of ethics and sensitivity of participants and information and provide adequate guarantees in relation to these issues.

1. For each study conducted, the staff member or student should complete an **ETHICS FORM FOR ORIGINAL RESEARCH (Appendix II)**. The completed form should be submitted to the Faculty Research Committee.
2. All proposals will be reviewed by the Faculty Research Committee to ensure that all ethics issues have been identified and that the proposed plans for managing the identified issues seem adequate. Referrals will include details of a recommendation from the Faculty Research Committee, where appropriate.
3. Where the proposal is approved, the Chairperson of the Faculty Research Committee will sign and return the ethics form to the applicant/s.
4. Where changes are required or where the proposal is rejected due to inadequate consideration of ethical issues, the researcher will be informed in writing by the FRC.

5.0 RESPONSE TO NON-COMPLIANCE

Non-compliance with the Faculty *Research Ethics Guidelines* whether deliberate, reckless or negligent, may be deemed as research misconduct. For the purposes of the *Research Ethics Guidelines* research misconduct includes the following (though is not limited to):

- i. failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research
- ii. deception in relation to research proposals
- iii. unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research participants

- iv. unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially
- v. deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment
- vi. fabrication, falsification or corruption of research data
- vii. distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results
- viii. dishonest misinterpretation of results
- ix. publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading
- x. plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- xi. misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors
- xii. inappropriate attribution of authorship
- xiii. fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment
- xiv. attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct
- xv. inciting others to be involved in research misconduct
- xvi.** collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others.

Cases of ethical misconduct by staff and students of the university will be dealt with under the University's disciplinary procedure for academic misconduct. Outside researchers will be subjected to non-adherence rules as stated in the Institutional Ethics Review Board of CPUT and their cases where necessary will be forwarded to the Ethics Review Boards of their home institutions.

All members of staff, students, research students and researchers are encouraged to report any case of ethical misconduct. This should be done directly to the Dean, Head of Research, chairperson of the Faculty Ethics Committee, appropriate Head of Department, or students' research supervisors.

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher[s] on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. *The information will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project.*

I agree/do not agree to the interview being recorded [audio/visual].

I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording equipment to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I confirm I am over 16 years of age.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed.....

Name.....

Date.....

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

A key issue is to ensure you provide participants with sufficient information about your project. One part of this might include giving potential participants an information sheet that includes the following:

- (a) The names of the people responsible for the research project and how they can be contacted.
- (b) The procedures which they will be asked to agree to participate in.
- (c) What the participants will have to do and how much time will be involved.
- (d) How the researcher obtained their name to ask them to consider participating in the project.
- (e) How the information will be used.
- (f) What will happen to the information when it is obtained.
- (g) How confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.
- (h) What will happen to the data on completion of the project.
- (i) The rights that individuals have if they take part in the project.

APPENDIX II

ETHICS FORM FOR ORIGINAL RESEARCH

This form is to be completed by the student, member of staff and other researchers intending to undertake research in the Faculty. It is to be completed for any piece of research the aim of which is to make an original contribution to the public body of knowledge.

For students this type of work will also have educational goals and will be linked to gaining credit - it is the type of work that will be the basis for a Masters/Doctoral thesis or any research project for which ethical clearance is deemed necessary:

Name(s) of applicant	
Project Title	
Is this a staff research project?	
Degree	
Supervisor(s)	
Funding sources	

Attached: Information sheet Consent form Questionnaire Other (Specify)

Questions for Consideration in the Summary

(i) How will you recruit participants? Is there any possibility that participants might feel coerced to take part and if so how can you manage this issue?

(ii) How will participants be made aware of what is involved in the research [prior to, during and after data collection]?

(iii) How will you ensure that participants really do understand their rights?

(iv) Attach your instrument for data collection (if applicable).

(v) Is there a risk of harm to participants, to the participants' community, to the researcher/s, to the research community or to the University? If so how will these risks be managed?

(vi) What plans do you have for managing the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in this study?

(vii) Are there any potential conflicts of interest for you in undertaking this study?

(viii) How will the findings be used on completion of the study?

(ix) Does this work raise any other ethical issues and if so, how will you manage these?

(x) What training or experience do you bring to the project or will enable you to recognize and manage the potential ethical issues?

Research Checklist:		Yes	No
1:	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? Examples include children, people with learning disabilities, or your own students. Animals?		
2:	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? Examples include students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing homes — anyone who is under the legal care of another.		
3:	Will it be necessary for participants to participate in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time — for example, covert observation of people in non-public places?		
4:	Will the study with the research subject involve discussion of sensitive topics? Examples would include questions on sexual activity or drug use.		
5:	Will the study involve invasive, intrusive, or potentially harmful procedures of any kind (e.g. drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants)?		
6:	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing on sentient subjects?		
7:	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		
8:	Does your research involve environmental studies which could be contentious or use materials or processes that could damage the environment? Particularly the outcome of your research?		

Signatures:

Researcher/Applicant:		Supervisor/Senior investigator (if applicable):
Date:		Date:

Please note that in signing this form, supervisors are indicating that they are satisfied that the ethical issues raised by this work have been adequately identified and that the proposal includes appropriate plans for their effective management.

Faculty Research Ethics Committee comments:

Approved	Referred back	Approved subject to adaptations	Chairperson	Date:
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Approval Certificate/Reference:
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