FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

REQUIREMENT FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

for

Staff Research Projects & Conferences
and
Postgraduate Students

Acknowledgement

This ethics clearance requirement and review process guide was compiled and edited by Dr Michael Twum-Darko (Chairperson of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)) of which some part was compiled by the SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SREC) and used with their permission.

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[1] Wassie, L., Gebre-Mariam, S., Tarekegne, G. and Rennie, S. (2019). Enhancing ethics review of social and behavioral research: developing a review template in Ethiopia, *Research Ethics,* Vol. 15(4) 1–23.

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SECTION A: DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

A.1 General

(a) Guidelines and information on the ethics review process may be perused in the following attachments: **REC 1** and **REC 2**.

(b) **REC 3** and **REC 4** are only relevant to research which includes direct human experimentation (e.g., invasive procedures such as drug trials and physiological tests in laboratories etc).

(c) **REC 5** is required in terms of submissions that use questionnaires/interviews along with letters of permission from the organizations/companies in which students are conducting their research, as well as draft copies of questionnaires/interviews.

(d) **REC 6** is a status report usually relevant to human experimentation projects.

(e) The Faculty of Business and Management Sciences (FBMS) Ethics Committee requires that the Researcher includes a section in the proposal, usually in the methods section, that deals with ethical considerations regarding the study.

A.2 Academic staff

Documents pertaining to submission to the FBMS Ethics Committee (Secretary: FBMSETHICS@CPUT.AC.ZA) must include:

	Required	Description
1	Proposal	1. **Staff Research**: Full research proposal approved by the Department using FBMS approved template; OR 2. **Funded Research**: A copy of the approved Grant AND a copy of the funding proposal for internally or externally funded research; OR 3. **Confcom Application**: A copy of an extended abstract which covers the following sections in the summary of a maximum of 1000 words: • Rationale: Background, Problem statement, Aim and Objectives; • Research methodology/approach; • Ethical considerations; • Outcome/implications; • Significance/Originality (novelty)
2	Data collection tool	1. **Staff/Funded Research**: If a questionnaire and/or structured interview are being used, then a draft copy of the aforementioned research tools must be included. The methodology section in the proposal should clearly articulate the process by which data is collected, the role of the researcher and the research participants. 2. **Conferences**: Not applicable for accepted conference papers.

	Required	Description
3	Consent letter	1. **Staff/Funded Research**: If the study involves a company/institution and /or any juristic entity, permission from that organisation (normally a CEO and/or someone of similar authority and responsibility) must be obtained and provided. 2. **Staff/Funded Research**: In relation to NOTE (a) below and for non-empirical/descriptive / desk research, a letter from the supervisor or HOD stipulating and justifying such will be sufficient. 3. **Conferences**: Not applicable for accepted conference paper
4	REC 5	In terms of submissions that use questionnaires and/or interviews, the form REC 5 is required. It must be completed and signed by the student, supervisor and the Head of department. A missing signature will disqualify the entire submission.
5	Similarity (Originality)report	A turn-it-in report with a source exclusion threshold of <5 words bear the full name of the researcher and the research title, indicating a similarity index of at most 12%, excluding the cover page, table of contents, references, groceries of words, table of abbreviations and meanings.
6	Scientific review	Proposal must be sent for scientific review before submitting for ethics approval. Two scientific review forms must be completed accordingly and signed as required.

A.3 Postgraduate Students

(a) No late submissions will be accepted;

(b) All departments must have an effective research committee to compile agenda and review;

(c) Departments must take full responsibility for quality of submissions.

(d) Incomplete submissions will not be served at the meetings if not on the agenda.

(e) All submissions to be made electronically to FBMSETHICS@CPUT.AC.ZA by the Supervisor or HOD or Chairperson of Departmental Research Committee (DRC) and must include the following:

	Required	Description
1	Proposal	A research proposal approved by the departmental research committee that includes ethical considerations of the study
2	Data collection tool	If a questionnaire and/or structured interview are being used, then a draft copy of the aforementioned research tools must be included. The methodology section in the proposal should clearly articulate the process by which data is collected, the role of the researcher and the research participants.

	Required	Description
3	Consent letter	If the study involves a company / institution and /or any juristic entity, permission from that organisation (normally a CEO and/or someone of similar authority and responsibility) must be obtained and provided. In relation to NOTE (a) below and for non-empirical/ descriptive/desk research, a letter from the supervisor or HOD stipulating such and justifying such will be sufficient.
4	REC 5	In terms of submissions that use questionnaires and/or interviews, the form REC 5 is required. It must be completed and signed by the student, supervisor and the Head of department. A missing signature will disqualify the entire submission.
5	Similarity (Originality) report	Similarity (originality) report of research proposal: • not exceeding 12% excluding cover page, table of contents, grocery of words and definitions, and list of references. • bears the full name of the student/researcher and the research title; • source exclusion threshold set to < 5;
6	Proof of registration	An indication that you are a registered student of this University for the current academic year of study.
7	Scientific review	Proposal must be sent for scientific review before being submitted for ethics approval. Masters: Two and Doctorate: Three scientific review forms need to be completed, and accordingly, and signed as required.

SECTION B: RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

(a) In the interest of maintaining research integrity and high ethical standards in scientific research in the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, please note the following as stipulated in the provisions of the research ethics policies of the University:

i) Any researcher embarking on empirical research that involves any kind of participants (human or animal) must ask for ethics clearance that covers the period of the research process **BEFORE** the research commences. This includes research that might be considered for future publication in conference outlets. No ethics clearance can be given retrospectively (i.e., for research that has been done). Thus, when applying to ConfCom or similar grants, ethics clearance must have been obtained well in advance and will not be **GRANTED RETROACTIVELY**.

ii) Any researcher embarking on a non-empirical (purely conceptual or philosophical) research, or research that does not involve any kind of participants (whether human or animal) must apply for ethics clearance **BEFORE** the research is formally conducted, i.e., after the literature review and preparatory work, but before an in-depth analysis and writing up. This is on the basis that the research matter (e.g., scholarly literature, information or research material in the public domain etc.) is available but has not yet been incorporated into the proposed research output.

iii) It is incumbent on applicants to ensure that they have the respective clearance in place before undertaking any kind of research.

iv) Manipulating the settings of Turnitin software to obtain low similarity or high originality index is an unethical behaviour, constitutes a criminal offense and will lead to disciplinary action by the structures of the University mandated to do so.

(b) Any other supporting documentation that would facilitate the FBMS Ethics Committee in their work in terms of considering ethical / moral and governance issues relating to the study can be provided.

SECTION C: MEETING DATES AND CONSENT FOR INTERNAL RESEARCH

C.1: Meeting Dates

All documentation must be sent to the secretary of the FBMS Ethics *Committee on or before the submission deadline. Late submission will not be tolerated. The FBMS Ethics Committee meets five (5) times in a year (see table below) and after careful deliberation of the required documents listed above, will consider whether the research project ought to be approved or rejected.*

	Meeting	Month of the year
1	Quarter 1	February
2	Quarter 2	April
3	Quarter 2	June
4	Quarter 3	August
5	Quarter 4	October
6	Quarter 4	November (*only when there are outstanding submissions to be cleared before the next academic year*)

C.2: Consent letter from the University

	Interview and/or Survey	Consent is given by
1	FBMS Department's Students	Head of Department
2	FBMS Department's academic/non-academic staff	
3	FBMS Students	Assistant Dean (Research & Innovation) of FBMS Faculty
4	FBMS academic and non-academic staff	
5	CPUT students	CPUT Unit of Research Integrity
6	CPUT academic/non-academic staff	
7	External Candidates or entities	

SECTION D: SCIENTIFIC CONSIDERATIONS OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. Is the study rationale adequately described?
   - Adequate literature review, novelty and scientific validity

2. Are the objectives clear and achievable?
    - Consistency between objectives and outcomes of the study rationale;
    - Whether the study period is appropriate to achieve stated objectives;
3. Does the study involve humans, or is document-based?
4. Will the study findings contribute to societal value/benefit?
    - Contribution to local capacity building or interventions;
    - Are local researchers and institutions involved in the research design, analysis and publication of results?
5. Are the methodology/approach adequately described?
    - Appropriateness and clarity of study design, sampling design, sufficient sample size, study site and period
    - Whether the appropriate level of gender balance is maintained in the sample
    - Whether the roles of each research team are described
    - Description of data collection methods: Focus group discussion, interview, observation, ethnography, deception, covert research
    - Appropriate data acquisition tools: topic guides, questionnaires, checklist, debriefing sessions, audio/video taping, transcription
6. Are inclusion/exclusion criteria clearly described?
    - Whether the study groups are clearly described and fairly selected
    - Whether eligibility criteria are appropriate
    - Whether recruitment procedures are clearly described
    - Considerations taken to avoid or minimize selection bias
7. Are participating study sites appropriate to conduct the research?
    - Evaluate the feasibility of the proposed research

SECTION E: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. Is risk-benefit assessment acceptable?
    - Whether potential benefits to participants or local communities are adequately described;
    - Whether the selection of participants is fair;
    - Whether risks are minimized;
    - Whether the research question is culturally, politically, economically or socially sensitive;
    - Whether permission is sought from respective officials to conduct the study;
2. Are participants vulnerable?
    - Whether adequate protection is in place for them;
3. Are withdrawal criteria appropriate?
    - Whether participants are offered withdrawal or refusal terms;
    - Whether withdrawal of information is offered in case of deceptive/covert or ethnographic studies;

4. Is there any community consultation?
    - Consideration for community sensitization;
    - Whether community leaders, local administration, and relevant actors are engaged in discussion;
    - Community consent;
5. Are participants recruited voluntarily?
    - Whether or not undue influence or coercion
6. Are procedures for obtaining informed consent appropriate?
    - Whether the process is adequately described in the proposal;
    - Need for written informed consent;
    - Need for waiver of consent or waiver of documentation of consent;
    - Considerations taken to respect the dignity of research participants;
    - Provision of adequate and justifiable reasons for deceptive research:
        a) whether the debriefing session is planned for participants;
        b) whether expected risks/harms are disclosed to participants during deceptive research and
        c) whether participants are offered the opportunity to withdraw their data after acquisition.
    - Description of contact details of the researcher on the information sheet
7. Are the contents of the informed consent document clearly described?
    - Whether basic elements of the information sheet are described;
    - Whether the language of the informed consent document is clear;
    - Whether the language used is consistent, expressed in simple and in layperson language and whether they are comprehensible.
8. Are potential conflicts of interest declared in the proposed study?
9. Are privacy and confidentiality maintained for participants?
    - Whether participants are given privacy during the study;
    - Whether personal identifiers of participants are kept confidential and coded;
    - Whether anonymity is maintained if not confidentiality (such as use of pseudonyms for places or names of participants);
    - Disclosure of confidentiality issues in some study designs, such as focus group discussions;
10. Are provisions for medical/emotional/psychosocial support appropriate?
    - Options for provision of counselling or rehabilitation services for study-related stress;
11. Are provisions of compensation/reimbursement appropriate?
    - Whether participants are offered incentives for opportunity cost, time lost or transportation, or damage to reputations.
    - Whether incentives are free from undue inducement