

East Bridge University's Policy on Research Ethics and Integrity.

Policy Statement

East Bridge University (EBU) is committed to supporting the highest standards of research integrity in all aspects of its research. Research integrity relates both to the scientific integrity of conducted research and the professional integrity of researchers. Integral to this commitment to research integrity is the implementation of a culture that promotes robust and transparent research ethical standards. This policy aims to outline the ethical principles, procedures, and expectations that guide the research activities carried out by staff and students at East Bridge University. This policy seeks to harmonize processes across the University, to support staff and students to enact the highest standards of ethical conduct in research.

Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff of the University, as well as to any research conducted under the name of East Bridge University, whether on campus, at external locations, or internationally.

Definitions:

1. **Research** is broadly designed to include any form of disciplined inquiry undertaken by staff and students that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory. Some consultancy, and knowledge exchange and impact activities, including public engagement, may also include activities that may be categorized as research.
2. **Researcher** is defined to encompass individuals involved in the research activities mentioned previously who are either staff or registered as students at East Bridge University. This includes staff as well as those conducting or supervising research on behalf of or within the University.
3. **Research Ethics** entails the application of Ethical Principles to all research activities. These Ethical principles are applied throughout the entire research process -from the conception and design, via data collection and analysis, to dissemination, and archiving of research materials and beyond. Researchers bear the responsibility of ensuring their research is conducted with careful attention to all pertinent ethical considerations.
4. **Research Ethics Review** involves a careful and proportionate evaluation of the ethical and trust-related issues connected to planned research activities, as well as how these issues

will be addressed by the researchers. It is important for all researchers to consciously reflect on the ethical implications of their work and get approval from ethics review committee (ERC) before starting any project. Ethical considerations are not limited to research involving humans or animals; they extend across many fields, such as physics, environmental studies, energy, and the arts.

5. **Research Ethical Principles:** This policy highlights the ethical guidelines and practices of the University to ensure high-quality academic research, in alignment with the University's strategic goals for 2030. The following key ethical principles present a broad overview of both international ethical standards and the specific requirements mandated for all research, conducted as part of academic programs, within the University.

- **Informed Consent:** The researcher must obtain informed consent from potential participants by providing them with detailed information about the aims and procedures of the research before commencing fieldwork. Additionally, the investigator must ensure that the consent is based on a level of comprehension that is accessible to all participants, regardless of their intelligence, maturity, or language ability (Budrich, 2016), to prevent any possibility of manipulation.
- **Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdrawal:** As research participants are free to choose to participate in the study (without any pressure or coercion), they should also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide a reason and without facing any negative consequences. These measures are essential to protect the rights of research participants.
- **Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality:** The researcher must ensure the privacy and anonymity of participants throughout the research process to protect their identities and interests. This includes explicitly stating in the informed consent process that the data is being collected solely for academic purposes, and participants' names will not be mentioned or disclosed. Additionally, the researcher should clarify that the data will remain confidential, used only for the research, and will not be shared beyond the terms agreed upon in the informed consent.
- **Data Management:** The researcher must clearly state that the data is solely accessible to them and the institution has no role in its handling. Additionally, the researcher should specify that the data will be used only for the research work under study. The person should mention how the data will be stored, where it will be retained, and for how long, including the procedures for its eventual destruction. Investigators must address these ethical considerations as part of the research process and develop a comprehensive data management plan.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The researcher is obligated to maintain transparency regarding the research design and research methods. Any modifications to the research procedures must be reported to the ethics committee for review and approval. Additionally, researchers should avoid employing deception unless it is deemed necessary and justifiable; in such cases, the deception must be disclosed to participants at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, the findings and analysis of the research should be made accessible to participants (without any fabrication and falsification) upon completion of the study to showcase adherence to the research goals and objectives.
- **Human Dignity:** All human participants, living or dead, must be treated with dignity and respect in academic research. Researchers must also be vigilant of minimizing risks and avoiding harm to the participants. Special consideration should be given to

protecting the dignity and well-being of vulnerable participants, including but not limited to children, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, institutionalized persons, or anyone who may lack capacity to provide informed consent.

- **Vulnerable populations:** Researchers should be familiar with disciplinary, institutional, and national/international guidelines regarding research on vulnerable populations. The [European Commission](#), the [Global Association of Human Trafficking Scholars](#), and the [Economic and Social Research Council](#) have produced guidance for research involving these groups.
- **Research involving children and adolescents:** Written informed consent must be obtained from a legally authorized representative in case of studies that involve children and adults who might not be in the position to give consent. Though the age of legal adulthood is determined by the country where study participants are based, which is typically between ages 16-18; ideally, researchers should also seek assent from children, where possible. A statement to confirm informed consent has been obtained must be included within the manuscript. Further, in settings where verbal informed consent has been obtained rather than written informed consent, this must be explained and stated within the manuscript.
- **Content Warnings:** Researchers must provide content warnings to participants while using articles that contain graphic and culturally sensitive content.
- **Images:** If the researcher uses any images or photographs of participants, they must obtain written consent from the participants. The researcher should provide adequate information about the potential benefits and risks of being included in photographs, as well as details on how the photographs will be used, stored, and circulated.
- **Beneficence and Non-maleficence:** Researchers should strive to maximize the benefits of their studies for individuals, the environment, and society while implementing robust safety measures to avoid or mitigate potential risks.
- **Declaring Conflict of Interest:** In the research ethics framework, researchers must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could compromise the integrity or objectivity of their work. A conflict of interest may arise when a researcher has financial, personal, or professional relationships that could influence the design, conduct, or reporting of the research. Researchers are required to declare such conflicts to the appropriate ethics committee or governing body before the commencement of the study. Full transparency ensures that the research process remains unbiased and that any potential risks to objectivity are addressed.
- **Funding Sources:** Transparency in funding is another key aspect of research ethics. Researchers must disclose all sources of financial support (if any) for their research, particularly, any external or industry-related funding. This declaration should be made during the ethics review process and should outline the nature of the funding and any conditions attached to it. By openly declaring funding sources, researchers help maintain the integrity of the research, avoiding any undue influence from funders that could affect the study's outcomes or ethical standards.

Procedure for Implementing the University Research Ethics Policy: All individuals conducting research at East Bridge University must adhere to the University Research Ethics Policy. Upholding stringent ethical standards is crucial, and an independent ethical review process is employed to ensure these standards are met. Appendices 1 to

3 outline the responsibilities and obligations of the University, staff researchers, and student researchers, respectively. Appendix 4 provides a detailed overview of the current organizational structure of the Research Ethics Committees (RECs) at East Bridge University. It also offers guidance on implementing research ethics, managing accountability, and reporting mechanisms, addressing projects involving multiple institutions, and understanding the interplay between ethics and governance.

Policy History and Review

- Approval Date
- Enrolment no. of the student
- Approved by: University President
- Next Year Review: 2025

University's Role and Responsibilities in Upholding Research Ethics: The University has a fundamental responsibility to foster a positive research environment that upholds the highest standards of practice. This involves establishing comprehensive policies and structures for governance and research ethics review, as well as providing essential training for researchers and those involved in research operations. By ensuring that these elements are in place, the University supports ethical research practices, promotes transparency and accountability, and enhances the overall quality and integrity of research conducted within the institution.

Researcher's Roles and Responsibilities in Upholding Ethical Standards: Researchers must be cognizant of ethical issues and complete mandatory ethics training as outlined by the university's policy. All research activities must incorporate ethical considerations and risk management while complying with both university and universal ethical guidelines. Researchers are required to participate in the ethical review process with respect and diligence, ensuring that they submit detailed documentation and appropriately categorize complex projects for thorough assessment. This ethics review process is designed to support and ensure adherence to the highest ethical research standards.

Students pursuing professional doctoral programs are required to adhere to ethical principles and procedures appropriate to the level and type of their research. Failure to comply with research ethical standards will be considered as *research misconduct* and may be escalated to the Academic Misconduct Officer. Such issues could lead to academic misconduct procedures and potential disciplinary action by the Code of Student Conduct.

The Role of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) in the Research Ethics Review Process: Research Ethics Committee (REC) plays a crucial role in evaluating research principles, methodologies, and ethical considerations. Guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, competence, and autonomy, RECs work to ensure that ethical standards are consistently upheld in all research activities. Their primary objective is to provide timely, constructive feedback to researchers, helping them comply with ethical guidelines. At East Bridge University, researchers must obtain REC approval through the ethics review process, which is designed to safeguard the integrity of the research. Throughout this process, researchers are expected to conduct their work ethically and responsibly, ensuring that the highest standards of ethical conduct are maintained.

Overview of the committees with responsibility for the implementation of research ethics procedures and reviews at the East Bridge University, and current specialist advisory groups (2024)



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