

POLICIES

ETHICAL CLEARANCE POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Research ethics is an essential element which governs any activity involving research on human subjects. The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) has a statutory responsibility to ensure that research in education which involves teachers, learners, rectors and parents amongst others, is conducted in accordance with high ethical standards. It is fundamental that staff and trainees at the MIE, who are engaged in research or research-related activities, maintain an all-encompassing ethical behaviour starting from the design of the study, its implementation and eventually to the submission of the report. Ignorance of the high ethical standards will not be considered as a viable excuse and it is imperative that researchers respect the participants' rights and dignity throughout the research undertaking.

2.0 Governing Principles

Ethical research is founded on the following set of core governing principles:

- (i) Research should benefit the individual and society at large.
- (ii) Research should not be conducted to cause harm to individual and the society.
- (iii) Research participants should consent voluntarily (Research Consent Form) in the study and be informed of their involvement.
- (iv) Integrity and transparency should at all-time permeate the research and curriculum related research undertakings (Ethics Compliance Form);
- (v) Research participants should be allowed to discontinue with the research at any time, without being penalized.
- (vi) Falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism are considered as research misconduct and are serious offences.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 Authors

Authorship is to be decided collegially right at the beginning of any research activity. However, since research evolves from fresh collaboration and networking, the research team is to collegially decide who should eventually be authors or who should require acknowledgement. To be considered an author, the incumbent should have contributed significantly to the development and design of the research/study, and to data collection, data analysis and drafting (or critically revising) of the report/article.

The authors (including co-authors) should bear the following responsibilities:

- To maintain accurate record, handling and storage of data. In case of funding by the MIE, the data could be made available to other researchers at the end of the study.
- To ensure that all work in the report/manuscript is original and when content from other sources have been used, the appropriate references have to be made.

3.2 Peer-review

Peer review is a process adopted in academia whereby a draft of the work (manuscript, book, document, etc.) is submitted to anonymous peers, qualified in the field, to offer feedback/comments/views on the material. The material is reviewed on the following merits:

- Importance and relevance
- Adequate review of the literature
- Sound methodological approach
- Completeness of discussion and findings

Peer-reviewers are required to:

- Maintain confidentiality (Confidentiality Form) during the peer review process
- Not retain any material from the review process
- Alert the Chair of the Ethics Committee of any potential conflict of interest and to withdraw from the peer-review process

3.3 Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest arises when a researcher's responsibility conflicts with his/her interest or obligation. It is imperative that the researcher discloses any potential situation of conflict of interest at any stage of the research. The scope of conflict of interest includes personal gains and financial connections.

3.4 Plagiarism

Academic integrity is the core guiding principle for any academic activity. Honesty, respect, value and transparency are the core ethical dimensions in academia. The Mauritius Institute of Education and all its Staff (Academic and Non-academic) have to strictly adhere to this principle and any deviance will entail sanctions.

Plagiarism in academia is an act of claiming someone's work, or part of it, as one's own (and lying about it later). Plagiarism is committed when:

- Another person idea(s) is(are) appropriated as one's own
- Citations are used without acknowledging the original source(s)
- Whole or part of a document is used without citing the original source
- An education model from other publications/report is appropriated as one's own
- Paraphrasing from a document or paper without acknowledging the original source
- Using or fabricating incorrect references
- A work is republished (self-plagiarism) either entirely or partially and the data presented as new findings
- Resorting to collusion - a form of agreement (overt or covert) between two or more individuals-to hide an act of plagiarism

4.0 Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee is a sub-committee of the Research Unit. All research conducted by trainees and staff of the Mauritius Institute of Education should obtain ethical clearance from the Research Unit after the recommendation has been issued by the Ethics Committee to undertake any research study/curriculum-related research work. Members of the Ethics Committee will communicate through an online system.

4.1 Terms of Reference

The Ethics Committee shall:

- Ensure that all research/curriculum activities adhere to high ethical standards
- Provide support and training to staff members and trainees on ethical conduct of research
- Conduct ethical review of trainees' theses/dissertations/research studies as well as MIE-funded research projects/proposals
- Makes recommendations to the Research Unit to ensure the smooth implementation of the policy
- Inform the Research Unit about outcomes of reviews to issue clearance to conduct research

4.2 Composition

- Members of Research Unit
- Head, Higher Studies Cell

5.0 Procedures for Dealing with Unethical Behaviour

In the eventuality that research ethics have been breached, the Research Unit will conduct an investigation to situate whether the breach is minor or serious.

- For minor breaches, the author(s) will be offered the opportunity to provide a written explanation and then remedy the situation with the support of the Research Unit.
- For major breaches, the author(s) will be offered the opportunity to provide a written explanation and the matter will then be referred to Management for the appropriate course of action.