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Amendment to University Research Ethics Policy, 2021

In terms of Section 22, sub section (2) of the Martin Luther Christian University Act 2005, read with Statute 6.3.1 of the Martin Luther Christian University Statutes and Rules 2016, and as recommended and approved by the Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022, the amendment to the University Research Ethics Policy, 2021, is hereby notified:

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) was constituted on August 17, 2009, by the Board of Governors, in recognition of the need for a system of ethical review for research involving human participants. Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) acknowledges and accepts the responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research [participants]¹ and their community, cultural and environmental milieu. The term ['participants']¹ used in the context of research includes humans, animals, communities, cultures and the environment as appropriate for the particular topic of research. By obtaining ethical approval, the researcher demonstrates his or her adherence to the accepted ethical standards of a genuine research.

[1. Amended vide Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022]

[The University Research Ethics Committee shall be registered with the appropriate authority.]¹

A. UREC Policy and Guidelines

1. Prior to any involvement of study [participants]¹ in research, proper consideration will be given to
 - a. the risks to the [participants]¹
 - b. the anticipated benefits to the [participants]¹ and others
 - c. the importance of knowledge that may reasonably be expected from the research
 - d. the informed consent process to be employed
 - e. the additional safeguards for vulnerable [participants]¹
 - f. the data protection provisions
2. Researchers working among indigenous peoples should be knowledgeable and sensitive about the worldview, culture and social and governance structures. A participatory approach to the planning and implementation of the research study is essential. Outlining the clear benefits of the research study, obtaining proper informed consent, sharing of the research study results with the community, and giving source credit for the knowledge are the guidelines that must be adhered to. [Where appropriate, the researcher (s) shall obtain collective consent from a community, especially when data pertaining to cultural practices and knowledge is proposed to be collected. Such data shall be considered as the intellectual property rights of the community from which it was obtained].¹
3. The collection of data involving study [participants]¹ will not be permitted until the UREC has reviewed and approved the research protocol, and until informed consent has been obtained in accordance with the abovementioned guidelines.
4. The UREC has the responsibility and authority to review, approve, disapprove and require changes to research activities. The Committee has the authority to suspend or terminate approval of research that is not being conducted as per the policy and guidelines.
5. If for any reason, a research study is abandoned, the researcher shall inform the UREC of his/her decision.

[1. Amended vide Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022]

6. The UREC recognizes the need for additional safeguards in research involving vulnerable [participants]¹ such as children (under the age of 18), prisoners, mentally disabled persons or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons.
7. Data confidentiality is the protection of individuals against the violation of their privacy, by regulating the processing of personal data. The UREC shall give proper consideration to the principles of proper handling of information.
 - a. Researchers shall obtain the consent from the [participants]¹ prior to processing their personal data.
 - b. In obtaining the consent, the researcher shall inform the [participants]¹ about the purpose of processing, and about their rights of data confidentiality.
 - c. In order to enable the subject to exercise his right of access, when obtaining consent, the researcher shall provide his identity and habitual residence.
 - d. The principles of good information handling imply that, personal data, which should be collected for a specific purpose, shall be processed fairly and lawfully. Thus the data processed has to be adequate, relevant and not excessive.
 - e. Measures shall be taken to anonymise data if possible and ensure confidentiality.
8. [The UREC may at its discretion, take up research projects from outside the university, for consideration of ethics approval.
9. Post-facto approval shall not be considered or granted. However, the UREC may provide a ‘note’ as to whether in its opinion, ethical procedures were followed, or whether, there were no ethical issues of concern in the project.
10. At the discretion of the chair, an application may be taken up by circulation.
However, the entire agenda of a meeting cannot be taken up by circulation.
11. Meetings may be conducted in person, in virtual form or by combination of the two.
12. A numbered annual archive of the resolutions passed and approvals given shall be maintained in hard and soft versions.

[1. Amended vide Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022]

B. Mandatory considerations for every research proposal

1. Cultural aspects: All research projects will include cultural aspects as an integral part of their research proposals. This will be reflected in the ethics application form.
2. Gender sensitive research: The research design should include gender orientation, context, methods and analysis. If an interpreter is to be used to collect data from women, the interpreter must be a woman. This will be reflected in the ethics application form.
3. Positionality statement: All research proposals will include a positionality statement.]¹

C. Constitution of UREC, MLCU

The University Research Ethics Committee of the Martin Luther Christian University is the body responsible for developing, coordinating and ensuring the implementation of the University's policies and procedures for the ethical conduct of research.

1. Appointment of the Chairman:
 - a. The Chairperson of the Committee will be appointed by the Dean, Research, from among the members.
2. Members of the UREC:
 - a. The names of the members and Chairperson shall be proposed by Dean Research and approved by the Board of Management.
 - b. The UREC shall be composed of eminent persons from various walks of life such as media, law, clergy, social work, education, health, who are not faculty or staff of the University.
 - c. The UREC shall also include ex-officio members including the Dean Research and Secretary, Doctoral Committee.
 - d. The term of office of the UREC members shall be three years.
3. The Secretary of the UREC:
 - i. The Secretary, UREC shall be a non-member and shall be appointed from among the MLCU faculty by the Dean, Research.

[1. Amended vide Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022]

4. [There shall be at least one gender expert in the committee.
5. All members shall undergo an online/offline course in Ethics to be prescribed and delivered as per the course work decided by the Dean, Research.]¹

The Committee may draw upon additional members or staff, as may be necessary for it to effectively fulfill its responsibilities. The Committee will meet at least twice a year.

D. How to apply

These procedures will apply to all research that is conducted by University faculty and staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, which involves study [participants.]¹

1. Each university member, student or member of staff, undertaking research will submit an application in the prescribed form, for ethics approval to the Secretary of the UREC of the university and prior to the commencement of the research project.
2. For Doctoral research scholars, they need to submit their application only after the Doctoral Committee has approved their [research proposal]¹ and prior to the commencement of the research project.
3. Both the researcher and the supervisor should sign the application form.
4. The completed form along with the research proposal shall be submitted to the Secretary, UREC, for necessary action.
5. The research project can commence only after written approval by UREC.

[1. Amended vide Academic Council meetings held on July 18, 2022 and Board of Governors meeting held on November 24, 2022]

ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

University Research Ethics Committee

MARTIN LUTHER CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

(This application form should be completed and returned to the Secretary, University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), for any research project undertaken by a university faculty, student or member of staff, prior to the commencement of the proposed project.)

1. Name _____ of _____ applicant:

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2. Designation _____ and _____ department:

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3. Applicant's contact number: Email address:

4. [Name (s) and designation (s) of the Supervisor, Co-Supervisor (s) or Principal Investigator _____ and _____ Co-Investigator _____ (s):]¹

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5. Title _____ of _____ proposed _____ project:

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6. Location of Study:

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7. Proposed date of commencement of data collection:

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8. Proposed date of completion:

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9. Has this project received research funding? If yes, please give details of the funding body.....

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10. [Briefly describe the project, including its purpose, methods and tools to be used (approx 500 words). Please attach the outline with this form. Also describe the cultural and gender issues to be addressed as part of the project. A short positionality statement should also be included.]¹

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11. Are any “conflict of interest” issues likely to arise in relation to this research? If yes, please provide details.

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12. Specify the number and type of participant(s) likely to be involved:

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13. State how the participant(s) will be recruited. Please attach copies of recruiting materials.

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14. State the manner in which the participant(s) or community consent will be obtained. (If written, please include a copy of the consent form.)

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15. Will the participant(s) be told they can withdraw from participation at any time, if they wish?

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16. How will the confidentiality of the data, including the identity of participants, be ensured?

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17. If the participants are under the age of 18 years or ‘vulnerable persons’ (e.g. with learning disabilities or with severe cognitive disability), how will consent be given (i.e. from the participants themselves or from a third party such as a parent or guardian) and how will assent to the research be asked for?

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18. Give a brief outline of the benefits that the research study is expected to provide to the subjects (approx 100 words). Please attach your outline with this form.

19. How will the results of the research be reported back to the participants?

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DECLARATION

For the Applicant:

The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and I take full responsibility for it. I also agree to abide by the guidelines of the University Research Ethics Committee during the entire course of my research study.

Signature of the applicant

.....Date:

For the Supervisor:

I understand my responsibilities as supervisor, and will ensure, to the best of my abilities, that the researcher abides by the University's Policy on Research Ethics at all times.

Signature of the Supervisor

.....Date



Dr Larilin Kharपुरi
Dean, Research

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