



## University of Botswana

### Policy on Ethics and Ethical Conduct in Research

<b>POLICY NAME</b>	Policy on Ethics and Ethical Conduct in Research
<b>Policy Administrator</b>	Director, Office of Research & Development (ORD)
<b>Policy Implementation</b>	University Research Advisory Committee (URAC)
1. Overall	URAC sub-committees
2. Assistance	ORD; Faculty RPC Chairs
3. Training	ORD; CAD
4. ORD Audit	CAD
5. Academic Quality	Faculty Research Committees Departmental Research Coordinators
6. Graduate Studies	Dean, SGS
<b>Policy Advice</b>	University Research Advisory Council (URAC)
<b>Policy Reference Number</b>	RD 04/05H
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<b>Policy Last Revised</b>	October 2004

## RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

### 1 AIMS

- 1.1 To establish ethical codes of practice which shall govern the conduct of research and consultancy activities at the University of Botswana
- 1.2 To establish mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the ethical standards and values of the University, the International Research Society and Civil Society
- 1.3 To establish the framework for developing and implementing Codes of Conduct for ethical behaviour in research and consultancy

### 2 BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 In order to be achieve its vision as a leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the world, research at the University of Botswana must be conducted according to ethical standards recognised internationally as being of the highest quality. This is because it is now common for organisations to require that research is

conducted according to an appropriate code of ethical practice before it can be accepted as worthy of recognition.

- 2.1.2 Ethical standards can be defined at various levels. For example nations are governed by ethical principles consistent with international law and local cultural values, while most individuals will have a set of principles or moral standards by which they choose to live. At the institutional level it is now common practice to require members to adopt and abide by a code of practice defined by the institution. Standards change with time, as Civil Society adjusts to changing circumstances, priorities and values.
- 2.1.3 The purpose of a Research Ethics Policy is therefore to define the codes of practice that the University will adhere to in its research activities, and to make these binding on all staff. It must take due note of international and national expectations and customs, and must also provide clear guidance on the conduct and behaviour of staff. It must also set up mechanisms to ensure that the standards are met, through appropriate procedures and regulations to ensure compliance. It must also allow for change.

## **2.2 Relevant Legislation and Documentation**

- 2.2.1 The Anthropological Research Act of 1967 requires that all anthropological research in Botswana must be approved by the Government. Permits are now issued by the appropriate Ministry to NGOs and private researchers.
- 2.2.2 Many Societies and Associations of researchers produce their own codes of practice that are binding on members of the society.
- 2.2.3 The University of Botswana has set itself a number of values to guide its vision and mission. In particular our values include the following:
  - (a) Academic integrity, which emphasises honesty
  - (b) Professional and ethical standards, which emphasise international research standards and morals that are acceptable to the participants
- 2.2.4 Other University policies that need to be considered in the development of codes of practice include the following:
  - (a) The Policy on Academic Honesty,
  - (b) Staff Disciplinary Regulations and Procedures,
  - (c) Research and Development Policy (UB/RD/04/02),
  - (d) Policy on Intellectual Property (UB/RD/04/04),

## **3 Definitions**

- 3.1 **Code of Practice** means a set of guidelines, rules and regulations that govern activities in a specified area.

- 3.2 **Misconduct in Research** means professional misconduct and conduct that generally tarnishes or impugns the good name of the University.
- 3.3 **Human Subject or Informant** signifies any person who is a source of raw or unformulated data and who is not acting as, or assisting, the principal investigator.
- 3.4 **University Community** includes University of Botswana staff and students, any student from another University or other tertiary education institution who is carrying out research at the University under the supervision of a member of staff, visiting lecturers, honorary lecturers, medical workers (whether or not in receipt of remuneration from the University), and any persons, including independent contractors and consultants, engaged under contracts of service or other agreements to work within the University.

## **4 Policy Statements**

### **4.1 General**

- 4.1.1 This Policy shall apply to all members of the university community conducting research as part of their involvement with the University of Botswana.
- 4.1.2 The University shall comply with the following International and national codes of practice
  - (a) The Botswana Anthropological Research Act (1967) and any subsequent revision
  - (b) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
  - (c) The International law on Research on the Human Genome

### **4.2 Use of Codes of Practice**

- 4.2.1 The University shall establish codes of practice that shall govern the conduct of research in specified areas, and these shall be binding on the University Community.
- 4.2.2 In particular there shall be codes of practice for the conduct of research involving human subjects, animals, Genetic Engineering, and Research involving hazardous substances, together with other codes of practice that may be introduced from time to time.
- 4.2.3 There shall also be a general code of practice defining good conduct of research.
- 4.2.4 Each code of practice shall take due account of international and national guidelines and laws.
- 4.2.5 Ethics review committees shall aim to provide helpful advice to researchers on how to accomplish the research aims. They shall be

encourage and assist researchers, while at the same time they shall be able to define and enforce the ethical principles and practice as necessary.

- 4.2.6 Each code of practice shall take due account of existing University policies, including in particular the University Values statement, and the policies listed above.
- 4.2.7 Failure to comply with a relevant code of practice shall be considered an offence for which disciplinary action may be taken.

## **5 Ethical Conduct in Research**

### **5.1 General**

- 5.1.1 In accordance with the University's values statements, research shall be conducted to the highest professional and ethical standards, including academic integrity and honesty, and adherence to international research standards and morals that are acceptable to the participants.
- 5.1.2 In research the following shall therefore be deemed to be serious unethical behaviour and shall be treated as serious misconduct (see item 1.6 of the Staff Disciplinary Regulations and Procedures):
  - I. Fabrication or falsification of data,
  - II. Plagiarism,
  - III. Failure to disclose conflict of interest,
  - IV. Deception, such as in failure to give potential subjects information that may lead to their refusal to participate in research,
  - V. Misleading ascription of authorship,
  - VI. Obtaining double funding for the same project or activity without notifying both funding sources,
  - VII. Personal use of funds obtained for the purpose of carrying out research, resulting in failure to carry out such research.
  - VIII. Failure to disclose to the University payments for conducting research
  - IX. Failure to safeguard the rights of human subjects as set out in the appropriate Code of Practice
  - X. Inhumane handling of animal subjects, as detailed in the appropriate code of practice
  - XI. Improper or dangerous handling and disposal of harmful chemicals harmful micro-organisms, and radioactive agents, which may pose a risk to the researcher, the community, or the environment
  - XII. Deliberate disregard of an approved code of practice

### **5.2 Responsibility for Compliance**

- 5.2.1 The onus is on the researcher to comply with these guidelines. Where there is doubt the researcher should refer to the relevant Ethics sub-committee, or the Office of Research and Development.
- 5.2.2 The University community as a whole is responsible for monitoring research projects and for identifying and reporting possible cases of non-compliance to the appropriate ethics committee.
- 5.2.3 The relevant ethics committee shall then be responsible for investigating and reporting cases of non-compliance in accordance with University disciplinary procedures.

## **6 Policy Implementation**

- 6.1 When appropriate a committee shall be established to consider research proposals requiring ethical approval under the code of practice. The committee decisions shall be binding upon the researchers, with the right of appeal to the URAC. The committee shall be a sub-committee of the University Research Advisory Committee (URAC), and shall consist of members of the University community, together with such members of civil society and the wider community as is deemed appropriate by the URAC.
- 6.2 Codes of practice shall be developed as required by sub-committees set up by the University Research Advisory Committee, or by the Office of Research and Development. Each code of practice shall require approval by Senate, and subsequent minor changes shall require URAC approval.
- 6.3 All Codes of Practice, and guidelines for the implementation of this Policy shall be contained in the Research Manual, and shall be available on the University Website for public inspection.
- 6.4 Until such time as a specific code of practice in a particular field of study is approved, the University Community shall abide by the principles in such codes of practice established by learned societies, or by international and national bodies, as may be deemed appropriate by practitioners in that field, or by such drafts as may be in preparation and under open discussion in the University. However failure to comply in detail with such codes shall not be considered a disciplinary offence.
- 6.5 Departmental Boards shall also be able to establish non-binding codes of practice within their disciplinary area.

## **7 Policy Review**

- 7.1 This Policy shall be reviewed at regular intervals.

## **APPENDIX FOR INFORMATION ONLY: EXAMPLE OF DRAFT CODE OF PRACTICE**

### **Code of Practice for Research involving Human Subjects**

1. The purpose of this code is to ensure that there is adequate protection for all participants in research studies, and to infuse integrity into the research carried out at the University of Botswana consistent with International standards of excellence.
2. In addition the University is required to comply with the laws of Botswana, and in particular the Anthropological Research Act, which requires that a permit must be obtained for any Anthropological Research of any kind.
3. In order to ensure conformity, all research on human subjects must be approved by a University Ethics committee. The responsibility of this committee shall be to:
4. Ensure that all research involving human subjects, conducted at the University of Botswana by any member of the University community is performed in such a way as to be ethically acceptable to the national and international community,
5. Ensure adequate procedures are in place to protect confidentiality of information arising from research, among all stakeholders,
6. Ensure that appropriate action is taken in all cases of misconduct in research, whether by lecturers or by students.
7. In all situations informants and researchers must be protected from being exploited by other stakeholders in any way.
8. In relation to human subjects, a researcher's paramount responsibility is to those studied. Researchers must do everything within their power to protect their informants' physical, social and psychological welfare and to honour their dignity and privacy. Thus the researcher must:
9. Protect the informants from being forced or coerced into providing information for financial reward,
10. Make provision for the informants to have the right to withdraw from participating in research at any point without financial loss,

### **2.0 Principles of the Policy**

11. Where there is conflict of interest, it must be clearly disclosed to all partners before the commencement of research.

12. Informants should have an understanding that they should not expect any personal benefit from participating in the study yet they have the right to withdraw from a study at any time without prejudice and without financial or other loss.
13. Researchers shall not provide rewards of any kind which would contravene the informants' rights to refuse participation or withdraw from the study without financial loss or embarrassment.
14. While there shall be no exploitation of informants for personal gain or coercion to participate by offering substantial inducements, compensation may be given for time spent in assisting with research.
15. Where possible, the Informed Consent document (a copy of which is included in the Research Manual) should be signed by the participant and the study coordinator or principal investigator, and also by the parent or legal guardian if the participant is a minor. The Informed Consent document shall be available in English and in the language of the participant as appropriate.
16. Informants shall have the right to remain anonymous.
17. Questions asked should not be insulting or embarrassing. Questions and data reporting methods shall be framed in such a way that the privacy of the individual is preserved.
18. Participants should be advised of the use of any monitoring devices such as tape recorders or typical of cameras. The purpose of the use of such devices and the use of the recording should be made clear to the participants, and participants should be free to reject them, if they wish.
19. Use of results should be consistent with the informants' right to welfare, dignity and privacy.
20. The privacy and wishes of informants shall at all times be respected. Except in cases of commissioned research, no reports shall be provided to sponsors that are not also available to the general public and, where possible, to the group studied itself, unless the reasons are made clear to the participants (e.g. where confidential market surveys are undertaken).
21. Informants shall be informed as fully as possible as to the aims and possible implications of the research, and shall be entitled to be fully advised of the outcomes within an acceptable time frame.