

KNUST POLICY 0006

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

# Policy on ETHICAL REVIEW



# POLICY ON **ETHICAL REVIEW**



KWAME NKUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE  
AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI-GHANA  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND  
PLANNING UNIT**

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# FORWARD

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi has a mission to advance knowledge in science and technology through creating an environment for undertaking relevant research, quality teaching, entrepreneurship training and community engagement to improve the quality of life. In order to achieve this mission, there is the need to have Ethical Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that research is conducted in an ethical manner across the University.

The University is therefore, grateful to all those who ensured the initiation, development and approval of this Policy.

**PROFESSOR K. OBIRI-DANSO**

VICE-CHANCELLOR

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As part of the strategic planning mandate of the Quality Assurance and Planning Unit (QAPU), university policies are initiated and proposed for approval by the Academic Board. The Unit therefore, initiated the Maintenance Policy which was approved by the Academic Board held.

The QAPU is grateful to Prof. Peter Donkor's committee for the draft of this Policy. We are equally indebted to all staff who helped to edit and review it.

Lastly, we wish to appreciate the contribution of all staff of this University who contributed in several ways for the development and approval of this Policy.

**PROF. CHRISTIAN AGYARE**

HEAD, QAPU

AUGUST, 2018

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is committed to ethical standards in all its activities. The University's Ethics Policy stipulates that KNUST has an obligation to all its stakeholders to observe and maintain high ethical standards in all transactions. This document sets out the policy for institutional management of research ethics at KNUST.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that research is conducted in an ethical manner across the University. In light of this, all researchers must be subjected to ethical review and approval prior to the implementation of research protocols notwithstanding the sources of funding. Again, all Principal Investigators must receive training on research ethics. The principles espoused in this policy cover the use of both human and animal subjects for research.

## **3. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all researchers at KNUST including any employee of the University, whether paid or unpaid, and/or any student enrolled at KNUST. It also applies to any visitors and collaborators from other national or international institutions working with and/or using KNUST facilities for research or teaching.

## **4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Research activities at KNUST shall be underpinned by the following principles.

### **4.1. Autonomy and Voluntary Participation**

Human subjects participating in the research must be made aware of the purpose of the research and be free to take part without coercion or penalty for non-participation. Individuals should be able to withdraw



at any time without being required to give a reason and without threat of any adverse consequences arising from their withdrawal.

## **4.2. Beneficence**

The research must be worthwhile and provide a reasonable opportunity for securing beneficial outcomes that outweigh any associated risks. The research methodology must be sound, ensuring the best results are obtained.

## **4.3. Non-maleficence**

Any possible harm must be avoided by robust precautions.

## **4.4. Confidentiality**

The confidentiality and anonymity of human research participants must be ensured. Their personal data must be anonymized and kept confidential. Access to such information should be restricted to the research team, unless the participant agrees otherwise or where the participant wishes his voice to be heard and identified, or in exceptional circumstances, where there is an overriding public interest.

## **4.5. Informed Consent**

Human participants in a research should be informed of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the potential benefits, risks, obligations, inconveniences associated with the research. Evidence of consent (either written or oral) should be obtained, documented and retained as appropriate. Participants should be informed that they are free to withdraw consent at any time without adverse consequences, and that any data provided by them will be destroyed should they request it.

## **4.6. Integrity**

The researcher must acknowledge any actual or potential conflicts of interest, and undertake their research in a manner that recognises standards of research integrity.

# **5. COMMITTEES**

## **5.1. Oversight Committee**

There shall be a central University committee, the KNUST Research Ethics Oversight Committee (KREOC) to oversee research ethics in the University. This Committee shall be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor. The KREOC will advise on broad strategies for research ethics and monitor the University's overall performance. The ethical review and approval of research activities shall be the responsibility of independent ethical review sub-committees.

### ***A) Functions***

The functions of KREOC shall be as follows:

1. Oversee, monitor and periodically review the University Policy on Ethical Review of Research;
2. Ensure that ethical review sub-committees are established and guided by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
3. Ensure all ethical review sub-committees are up to date with registrations with appropriate regulatory bodies;
4. Monitor the training requirements of members of the ethical review sub-committees and facilitate the training;
5. Ensure that all KNUST researchers receive training in research ethics and integrity;
6. Advocate resources for the ethical review sub-committees;
7. Assist with resolving conflicts involving sub-committee members;

8. Work with the sub-committees to determine applicable fees;
9. Hold periodic fora to engage researchers;
10. Institute periodic evaluation of its performance;
11. Provide annual reports to the Vice-Chancellor on ethical review activities in the University; and
12. Committees must identify which research projects carry high risk from ethical perspectives (including reputational risk to the University and political risks) and monitor their implementation for the purpose of identifying and recommending a review of the approval.

## ***B) Membership***

The members of the committee shall comprise the following:

1. A Chairperson to be appointed by the Vice Chancellor
2. Chairpersons of the human health, animal and humanities research and environment and bio-safety sub-committees shall be automatic members of the central committee
3. Three (3) active researchers of professorial and non-professorial rank
4. A Secretary of an Assistant Registrar's rank or higher

## **5.2. Review Committees**

The University shall have independent ethical review sub-committees who will receive and review applications for ethical review of research projects. They shall operate autonomously and shall be guided by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The sub-committees are as follows:

1. Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC)
2. Committee for Human Research Publications and Ethics (CHRPE)

3. Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HUSSREC)
4. Environment and Bio-safety Committee (EBC)

The functions of the sub-committees shall be as follows:

1. Ensure that research activities at KNUST are carried out in compliance with the relevant SOPs as well as national and international regulations;
2. Consider applications for ethical review of research projects;
3. Collaborate with KREOC to build the capacity of the members and researchers;
4. Ensure the protection of the rights and well being of research participants;
5. Ensure the security of research protocols and related materials;
6. Act as a vehicle for the promotion of research integrity; and
7. Submit an annual report on their activities to KREOC.

## **6. ETHICAL REVIEW PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Application for Ethical Approval**

All researchers at KNUST are required to apply for and receive ethical approval before the commencement of any research. Researchers are required to consider all the ethical issues related to the proposed research activity, taking into consideration the ethical principles outlined in Section 4 of this document. Researchers are required to submit the application for ethical approval for the proposed research to the relevant review committee.

### **6.2 Compliance**

All researchers at KNUST are required to comply with the ethical obligations relating to their approved research activity throughout its implementation. If there is a need to deviate from the approved

research, the Principal Investigator shall resubmit an application for ethical approval before continuing with the research.

Failure to secure ethical approval before the commencement of any research, or before continuing an approved research when significant deviations have been made, amounts to non-compliance. Disciplinary action for non-compliance will be in accordance with KNUST procedures.

### **6.3 Appeals**

Researchers who disagree with a subcommittee report on their research protocol may appeal to the same committee in writing, stating the reasons for the disagreement. The subcommittee shall invite an external review of the protocol. The external reviewer(s) will be independent, having no previous involvement in the ethical review process leading to the appeal. The review report will be issued and this report will be final and not subject to further review.

Any member of a research ethics sub-committee who is dissatisfied with the performance of the committee may make a written report to the KREOC. The KREOC will, in the first instance, seek the views of the Chairman of the sub-committee on any such report before investigating the matter further.

### **6.4 Complaints**

A clear procedure should be developed for the purpose of handling complaints. In the case of whistle blowing it should be done in writing with the appropriate supporting evidence. Anonymous whistle blowing will be pursued only at the discretion of the Director of the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) or whoever is at the apex of the research committee. Efforts should be made to prevent victimisation and also to protect researchers from baseless or frivolous allegations.

## **7. TRAINING**

To ensure that researchers adhere to ethical principles, the University requires that members of the ethics committees, staff and students

participating in research involving human and non-human participants complete periodic training in the ethical conduct of research. KNUST staff should be required to acquire training and certification **every five years**. Ethical training for students should be formally incorporated into undergraduate or postgraduate training programmes. All degree programmes (undergraduate, Master's and research degrees) must incorporate at least one lecture, seminar or support session that covers research ethics. Training can be online or face-to-face. Members and potential members of review committees are required to show proof of training prior to appointment to the committee. Researchers are also required to show proof of training before receiving ethical approval for their research.

## **8. RECORD KEEPING**

Each review sub-committee shall maintain a database to facilitate tracking of research projects submitted for review. All documents of the Committees shall be dated, filed and archived. Hard copies of research projects approved by the Committee will be filed and archived for at least ten (10) years.

## **9. ACCESS TO DATA AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Published research articles may be deposited in the KNUST research repository. Data that could be linked to identifiable individuals must be held according to the Data Protection Laws of Ghana and the appropriate international legislation. It must also adhere to any confidentiality assurances given to the research participants at the time of giving informed consent. Such data must be anonymised before publication in research articles.

Primary research data is expected to be held for five to ten years after the close of the research project. Research activities must comply with any requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom to Information Act. Due consideration must be given to any implications of the Intellectual Property policy of the University and any other legal body including the Registrar-General's Office.

## **9.1 Incidental Findings**

An Incidental Finding is a finding about a research participant that has the potential health or reproductive significance, which is discovered during the course of a research project, but is beyond the scope of the research study. It is incumbent on the ethics committees to develop guidelines that will ensure the disclosure of the possibility of discovering incidental findings and the plans for their management.

## **10. RESOURCES**

The KREOC and all the ethical review sub-committees should be provided with the following:

1. Administrative personnel
2. Office space, furniture, equipment and supplies
3. Budgetary allocation

## **11. CONCLUSION**

This policy framework constitutes general guidance on the type of ethical issues envisaged. It also constitutes the expectations of the University and other research stakeholders about how such envisaged ethical issues must be resolved. It is not intended to be exhaustive and further guidance should be available at the KNUST Research Ethics Oversight Committee.







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