



KNIGHTS
COLLEGE

Research Ethics

Policy

Document Overview

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V2	01/07/2025	Document amended due to company rebranding	

Continuous Improvement

Policies, procedures and processes are meant to be 'living' documents that need to be followed, implemented and maintained. If the procedure does not reflect the current, correct work practice please contact us on

quality@knights.edu.mt

1. Research Ethics Policy

1.1 Scope and Applicability

This Research Ethics Policy applies to all research activities conducted under the auspices of KNIGHTS including research conducted by:

- **Faculty and Staff:** Any individual employed by KNIGHTS, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary, who is engaged in research activities.
- **Students:** All students enrolled at KNIGHTS, at any level (undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral), who are conducting research as part of their academic program, including theses, dissertations, and independent studies.
- **Visiting Researchers and Collaborators:** Any external researchers, visiting faculty, or collaborators conducting research in partnership with or under the support of KNIGHTS.
- **Research Assistants:** Any individual working on research projects within the institution, regardless of their employment status, must comply with the ethical guidelines outlined in this policy.

The policy covers all forms of research, including but not limited to:

- **Primary and Secondary Research:** Whether data is collected directly from participants or through secondary sources such as databases, archives, or previously published studies.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative Research:** This includes case studies, interviews, surveys, experiments, observational research, and any other research methodology.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** Research conducted across various disciplines, regardless of the field of study, is subject to the ethical standards outlined in this policy.
- **Funded and Unfunded Research:** Research supported by internal or external funding sources, as well as independent research, must adhere to this policy.

The policy is applicable at all stages of the research process, including but not limited to:

- **Research Design and Planning:** Ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into the development of research proposals and methodologies.
- **Recruitment of Participants:** Adhering to ethical standards for the recruitment of human participants, including obtaining informed consent.
- **Data Collection:** Ensuring that data is collected in an ethical manner, with respect for participant privacy, dignity, and rights.
- **Data Analysis and Interpretation:** Applying ethical standards to the interpretation of research findings, avoiding bias and ensuring transparency in reporting.
- **Publication and Dissemination of Findings:** Ensuring that research findings are shared ethically, with appropriate respect for participants and proper acknowledgment of contributions.
- **Use of Institutional Resources:** Any research conducted using institutional resources, facilities, or support must comply with this policy.

This policy applies regardless of where the research is conducted, including on-campus, in external field locations, or in virtual/digital environments. It ensures that all research under the purview of KNIGHTS is conducted with integrity, respect for participants, and compliance with applicable legal, ethical, and professional standards.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Research Ethics Policy is to establish clear guidelines and standards for conducting research at KNIGHTS in an ethical and responsible manner. The policy aims to:

- **Promote Ethical Integrity:** Ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of KNIGHTS adheres to the highest ethical standards, fostering a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability in research practices.
- **Protect the Rights and Welfare of Participants:** Safeguard the dignity, rights, and well-being of individuals participating in research. This includes ensuring that participants provide informed consent, their privacy is respected, and they are not exposed to harm or coercion.
- **Ensure Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Requirements:** Ensure that all research activities comply with relevant national and international laws, regulations, and professional codes of conduct related to ethics, data protection, and research integrity.
- **Foster Responsible Research Practices:** Encourage researchers to reflect on the ethical implications of their work at every stage of the research process, including design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results.
- **Promote Accountability and Transparency:** Establish clear mechanisms for ethical oversight, including the role of ethics committees, to ensure that research is conducted responsibly and that any ethical concerns are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

- **Support Research Integrity:** Guide researchers in maintaining honesty and transparency in the representation and reporting of research findings, avoiding misconduct such as plagiarism, data fabrication, and manipulation of results.
- **Protect the Reputation of the Institution:** Uphold the academic and ethical reputation of KNIGHTS by ensuring that all research conducted under its name reflects the institution's commitment to excellence and ethical responsibility.

2. Definitions

Ethics	The moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. In the context of KNIGHTS, ethics refers to the standards that guide decision-making and behaviour within academic and professional settings.
Informed Consent	The process through which participants are fully informed about the nature, purpose, risks, and benefits of the research study before voluntarily agreeing to participate. It involves clear communication and documentation that the participant understands and consents to the study.
Personal Ethics	The code of conduct that an individual holds in both personal and professional interactions. At KNIGHTS, personal ethics involves the integrity, accountability, and respect that each member brings to their role within the institution.
Research Ethics	The specific ethical standards that govern the conduct of scientific and academic research. These principles ensure the integrity of research methods and the protection of participants' rights within all research activities conducted by KNIGHTS.
Research Participants	Individuals, groups, or entities from whom data is collected or who are involved in the research process, whether directly or indirectly. This includes human subjects, as well as any data or information derived from people.

- Data Collection** The process of gathering information or data for research purposes, through various methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, or secondary sources.
- Recruitment** The process of identifying, approaching, and enlisting individuals to participate in a research study. Recruitment must be voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence on potential participants.
- Confidentiality** The ethical obligation to protect private information collected during the research process. Researchers must ensure that personal data is kept secure and only used for the purposes for which

Anonymity	A practice in research where the identity of participants is not disclosed or is protected, ensuring that data cannot be traced back to any individual.
Research Design	The overall strategy and framework for a research project, outlining how data will be collected, analysed, and interpreted. It includes decisions related to ethical considerations and the treatment of research participants.
Research Integrity	The adherence to ethical principles and professional standards in the conduct of research, including the avoidance of misconduct such as plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification of data.
Vulnerable Populations	Groups of people who may require special consideration in research due to factors such as age, disability, socio-economic status, or diminished autonomy, making them more susceptible to coercion or exploitation.
Data Dissemination	The process of sharing research findings with the academic community, stakeholders, or the public through publications, presentations, or other forms of communication, in a manner that respects the rights of participants and maintains research integrity.
Misconduct	Any breach of ethical or professional standards in the research process, including plagiarism, data falsification, manipulation of findings, and other forms of academic dishonesty.

3. Ethical Guidelines

General ethical guidelines are outlined in the **Code of Ethics of KNIGHTS**. This code serves as a foundational document, establishing the principles of ethical conduct, integrity, and responsibility that all researchers must adhere to.

This policy provides a comprehensive framework for addressing ethical issues related to research design, participant recruitment, data handling, and the dissemination of findings. Researchers at KNIGHTS are expected to follow these guidelines to ensure their work aligns with the institution's commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards

Our main principles, as outlined in the Ethics Guide of the Chartered Association of Business Schools, London (2015), are briefly defined below:

1. Integrity, honesty, and transparency.
2. Respect for people and the prevention of harm.
3. Authorship and respect for intellectual property.
4. Consent.
5. Protecting privacy, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining anonymity.
6. Declaring professional and personal affiliations and sources of funding and support.
7. Avoid misleading, misreporting, misunderstanding, and unjustified deception.
8. Observe principles of governance, management, and administration.

3.1. Framework for Ethical Excellence

KNIGHTS strives to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in all research activities.

To promote and uphold research integrity:

The Academic Affairs Board will govern the Research Ethics at KNIGHTS. The board is made up of the School Principal, the Academic Affairs Manager and the Admissions and Student Support Executive.

Regular Policy Reviews: Ethical standards and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in legislation, advancements in professional codes of practice, and emerging technologies. These reviews aim to align research practices with evolving definitions of ethical integrity.

The framework ensures that ethical considerations are embedded throughout the research lifecycle, from design to dissemination, ensuring compliance and responsibility in research.

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3.2. Research Design

The design of research projects at KNIGHTS must integrate ethical principles from the outset.

All research must:

- **Address Ethical Issues:** Researchers must identify and carefully consider the ethical implications of their study design, including the methods, potential risks, and benefits to participants.
- **Justification for Ethical Clearance:** Applications for ethical clearance should demonstrate how the researcher has addressed these ethical concerns. A thorough justification is required, particularly for studies involving vulnerable populations, sensitive topics, or novel methodologies.
- **Ethical Impact of Research Methods:** The chosen methods should minimize harm and ensure participant welfare, with careful attention to informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection.

Ethical clearance is required for all research projects, and any study involving human participants or sensitive data must undergo a rigorous review process to ensure it adheres to ethical standards.

3.3. Recruitment of and Access to Participants

Research involving human participants must prioritize their autonomy, dignity, and well-being. The recruitment process must adhere to the following principles:

- **Voluntary Participation:** All potential participants must be fully informed about the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study, allowing them to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. No undue pressure, coercion, or inducement should be used to secure participation.
- **Informed Consent:** Informed consent must be obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. This process must be transparent and fully documented, ensuring that participants understand their rights, including the ability to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- **Protection of Vulnerable Groups:** Special care must be taken when recruiting participants from vulnerable populations, such as minors, individuals with disabilities, or economically disadvantaged groups. The recruitment process should be sensitive to their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Recruitment must always respect the autonomy of participants, ensuring that they are free to make decisions about their involvement in research without undue influence.

3.4. Procedures of Data Collection

Data collection is a critical aspect of the research process that must be handled with the utmost ethical care. The following principles apply:

- **Respect for Participants:** Data collection procedures should be designed to respect the dignity, rights, and privacy of all participants. Researchers must not ask participants to perform tasks that could cause harm, discomfort, or distress.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Researchers must take appropriate measures to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Any data that could potentially identify participants must be handled with strict confidentiality protocols, and identifiable data must not be shared without explicit consent.
- **Minimal Intrusiveness:** The data collection methods should be as non-invasive as possible, collecting only the data necessary for the research objectives.

Participants

should be given clear explanations about the nature of the data being collected and how it will be used.

The ethical handling of data collection ensures that participants' rights and well-being are protected throughout the research process.

3.5. Research Relationships

The relationships between researchers and participants must be grounded in ethical principles. Researchers must:

- **Avoid Manipulation:** Relationships between researchers and participants should not be exploited or manipulated to gain access to data or influence outcomes. Power imbalances, especially in hierarchical relationships, should be acknowledged and mitigated to ensure ethical interactions.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Researchers must maintain professional boundaries at all times, avoiding any behaviour that could compromise the integrity of the research or exploit the participant in any way.
- **Transparency:** All research-related interactions with participants should be clear, transparent, and honest. Participants should be fully aware of the researcher's role and intentions in their interactions.

Ethical research relationships foster trust and respect, ensuring that both parties' rights and interests are safeguarded.

3.6. Interpretation and Analysis of Research Findings

Ethical interpretation and analysis of research data is fundamental to maintaining the integrity of research findings. Researchers must:

- **Acknowledge Personal Bias:** Researchers must recognize the influence of their own beliefs, values, and biases on the interpretation of data. It is important to remain as objective as possible, while also disclosing any potential biases that may affect the conclusions drawn from the research.
- **Fair and Accurate Representation:** Data analysis should be conducted in a fair and unbiased manner, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the data collected. Researchers must avoid manipulating or distorting data to fit a predetermined narrative.
- **Transparency in Methodology:** The methodology used in the analysis should be clearly explained, allowing others to understand and replicate the findings. Researchers must be transparent about any limitations in their methods or data.

The ethical analysis of research findings ensures the credibility of the research and the trustworthiness of the conclusions presented.

3.7. Re-presenting Research

The dissemination and re-presentation of research findings must be done with sensitivity to ethical considerations. Researchers are required to:

- **Respect Participants' Dignity:** When presenting research findings, particularly in public forums or publications, researchers must ensure that participants are represented with respect and dignity. Care must be taken to avoid any portrayal that could harm participants or misrepresent their contributions.
- **Informed Consent for Visual Representation:** When using images, videos, or any visual data that may identify participants, researchers must obtain explicit consent. Even in cases where participants are not the primary subjects, their presence in the research data requires consent for publication or dissemination.
- **Responsible Dissemination:** Research findings should be shared responsibly, ensuring that the information is presented truthfully, with any limitations clearly

outlined. Misleading or incomplete representations of research can have ethical implications for the research community and wider society.

Ethical re-presentation of research protects participants and ensures that research findings contribute positively to the academic community and society at large.

3.8. Ethical Conduct

The ethical conduct of research is integral to the mission of KNIGHTS. This policy serves as a guiding framework to ensure that research conducted under its auspices adheres to the highest ethical standards, protecting the rights and well-being of participants and promoting the integrity of research findings. Regular reviews will ensure that this policy remains current with evolving ethical standards and practices in the research community.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Academic Affairs Committee** is responsible for developing and reviewing ethical policies and procedures that govern all research practices. This committee ensures that researchers follow institutional guidelines and international ethical standards.

Students are expected to complete the Research Methods module. This module is aimed to provide the skills, knowledge, and autonomy to be able to conduct business research that is clear and ethically correct.

As part of the assessment of the research methods module, **Students** will need to submit a **Research Proposal (See Appendix A of Dissertation Guidelines)** by a stipulated deadline via the learning management system. It is important that each section of the research proposal form is filled in correctly, and Harvard referencing used throughout (**See Appendix B of Dissertation Guidelines for Harvard Referencing**).

The research proposal will be reviewed by the **Tutor**, and based on the tutor's feedback, Student may be asked to re-submit a revised version.

Students are encouraged to carefully read the **Ethical Considerations section** of the research proposal. There have been cases where dissertations have been rejected for failing to adhere to such ethical principles.

Once the final version of the research proposal is approved by the tutor, students will need to submit an Ethical Considerations Approval Form (**See Appendix A of Dissertation Guidelines**) via the LMS which is verified and vetted by the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC).

You will receive a letter from the AAC with official approval or otherwise. If approval is declined, you will be provided with detailed feedback on what is expected and asked to re-



submit a proposal. **Only upon confirmation from the AAC can you start conducting your research.**

It is advised that the research methodology and objectives of the research are not changed once submitted. However, should a student make an official request in writing for such change, the matter will be discussed at Academic Affairs Committee level before a reply is given to the student.

Students must obtain participants' consent when conducting research. Researchers can either provide respondents with the **Participant's Consent Form** submitted as part of the research proposal, or they can include an online equivalent in cases where data collection is done via online methods.

No data or research should be collected before official approval from the Academic Affairs Committee is given following submission of the Ethical Considerations Approval Form.

5. Associated Policies/Documents

- KNIGHTS Ethos
- Code of Ethics
- Code of Academic Integrity
- Recognising and Avoiding Plagiarism Policy and Procedure
- Dissertation Guidelines
- Assessment of Dissertations
- Ethical Considerations Approval Form
- Research Participant's Consent Form
- Research Proposal Form