University of Luxembourg Policy on Ethics in Research

The University of Luxembourg advocates the highest standards of ethics in research.

All individuals involved in conducting research at or for the University of Luxembourg (UL), whether as faculty, staff, student or visitor (including contractors on campus), shall ensure that research complies with the UL procedures and all applicable laws, regardless of the location of the research.

The UL's research office will exercise appropriate administrative overview to insure that the institution's policies and procedures designed for protecting the rights and welfare of human participants are being effectively applied.

The following principles should apply to all research work carried out at or for the UL.

Integrity:

1. Researchers should be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole range of research work, including planning research, applying for funding, undertaking research, publishing results, and when peer reviewing the work of other researchers.
2. The direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others should always be acknowledged.
3. Researchers are accountable to society, their professions, the institutes where the research is taking place, the faculty, staff, students and others involved and, in particular, to the sponsor funding the research.
4. The UL will take allegations of misconduct in research very seriously. Proven misconduct in research (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and deception in proposing, carrying out, or reporting results from research activities, as well as deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research) is regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.
5. Researchers should report cases of suspected or alleged misconduct in research to the vice-president research in his/her capacity as chairperson of the Ethics Review Panel, and to do so in a responsible and appropriate manner. If uncertainty exists, researchers should first consult their Dean or Director, unless a conflict of interest exists.
6. Misconduct also includes retaliation of any kind against a person who reported or provided information about suspected or alleged misconduct in research and who has not acted in bad faith.
7. Allegations will be investigated in the strictest confidence.
8. Any allegation which is found to be unproven and which has been frivolously or maliciously made, may result in disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff who made the allegation.
9. The UL is committed to ensuring that allegations of misconduct in research are investigated with all possible thoroughness and vigour.

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Independence, integrity and quality.

10. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken in a way that ensures academic independence, integrity and quality.

Involvement of human participants.

11. Researchers should consider and be aware of the active involvement of human participants in research and in the dissemination of research findings.
12. All research involving human participants must respect the rights, dignity and safety, health and welfare of participants, faculty, staff, students and visitors (including contractors on campus) involved.
13. The benefits of the research must outweigh the risks to the human participants.
14. Researchers should consider the impact any publication of research findings may have on participants under investigation, on the groups they represent, on those directly involved in their life, and on others involved in the research.

Consideration for the natural environment.

15. All research should be assessed for its potential impact on the natural environment.
16. Any potentially harmful and/or irreversible changes to the environment have to be weighed against the expected benefits, while considering the economic, social and environmental dimensions, both short term and long term.
17. Experimental set ups must be removed at the conclusion of the experiment returning the natural environment to its pre-experiment quality.
18. Permission must be available to conduct the research at the intended location.

Informed consent and respect for confidentiality.

19. Participation shall be voluntary.
20. Informed, competent and understanding consent by participants is essential to good research. This involves a full and careful explanation in language that is understandable by lay persons.
21. The consent of the participant must be obtained without duress, deception, or the withholding of information. This means that the purpose of the research, the procedures to be followed, the possible risks involved, and the benefits to result from the activity, are clearly explained to the participant and the participant's rights are clearly represented.
22. The participant should also be told that he or she is free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
23. The confidentiality of information given by participants, and the privacy and anonymity of participants, must be respected.
24. When existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, diagnostic specimens, or established cell lines are used, these should have been de-indentified, i.e. it should not be possible to identify participants directly or through combining identifiers linked to the participants.
25. Existing material as described under 24 should have been collected in a way that complies with national and European ethics guidelines and legislation.

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26. Researchers should not attempt to identify participants from existing, de-indentified material.
27. If the research reveals pathological or otherwise unusual information the participant is not aware of, the Ethics Review Panel has to be consulted to determine whether and how this information is transferred to the participant.

Consideration for vulnerable people.

28. Enhanced ethical consideration should be given in respect of those who may be less competent or able to offer or refuse consent.

Consideration of risks.

29. The ethical risk of any research should be considered before work is undertaken, as well as when risks become apparent during the research, when the research plan is changed, or when regulatory, procedural or statutory changes may affect ethical risk.
30. Risks are minimized by using the safest procedures consistent with sound research design.
31. Researchers proposing a procedure or project should consult their Principal Investigator, who should summarize the ethical risks envisaged, and any protocols or precautions that are to be deployed to minimize them.
32. If the proposal involves more than minimal risk, independent ethics review should be considered before work is undertaken.
33. A list of research activities exempted from an ethics review is available upon request.
34. The Ethics Review Panel or sponsor retain final judgment as to whether a particular activity can be considered an exemption or has to be subject to an ethics review.
35. Research subject to regulation always has to be submitted to the national committees for approval. If such a committee does not exist, the relevant UL ethics committee has to give its advice.
36. It shall be the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to make certain that all current policies and procedures governing the participation of humans as research participants are adhered to in the research project and the publication and dissemination of its results.

Independent ethics review.

37. Where the proposal involves more than minimal risk, and when requested by sponsors or publishers, an independent review process should be used for appropriate scrutiny before work is undertaken or published. This involves the submission of the proposal and any relevant material to the Ethics Review Panel. Where required, the Comité National d'Ethique de Recherche or the Commission Nationale pour la Protection des Données should be consulted and used.
38. The primary consideration should be rights, dignity and safety, health and welfare of participants, faculty, staff, students and visitors (including contractors on campus) involved.
39. The researcher should bring any risks that become apparent during the research, changes in the research plan or any regulatory, procedural or statutory changes that could affect ethical risk, to the attention of the reviewing committee.

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40. An ethics review need not be exhaustive, but it should be reasonable and proportionate.

Maximised benefit, minimised harm.

41. Research should balance the anticipated benefits against potential harms to human or animal participants, researchers involved, the environment, and the wider academic community.
42. Harm to research participants must be avoided.

Dissemination and publication of results.

43. Publication and dissemination of results of high quality research is encouraged, but must be done responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of any such dissemination in the wider media.
44. The UL tries to ensure that sponsors understand that researchers must have academic freedom and sponsors should neither discourage publication nor the dissemination of research or research findings. The UL recommends that every effort should be made to inform the sponsors of any potential publication or dissemination of the research findings. This will enable the sponsor in question to have adequate time and accurate information to protect any arising intellectual property or to plan their own public relations, in conjunction with the UL.

Other considerations

45. Researchers shall be aware of the ethics policies of research sponsors and publishers.
46. Compliance with this policy requires compliance with national laws or regulations which provide additional protections for human participants.
47. This policy does not affect any local laws or regulations which may otherwise be applicable and which provide additional protections for human participants.
48. This policy does not affect any foreign laws or regulations which may otherwise be applicable and which provide additional protections to human participants of research.
49. When UL researchers or students conduct research in a country other than Luxembourg, procedures normally followed in the particular country may differ from those in this policy. The Ethics Review Panel can advise the Vice-president for Research to approve the substitution of the foreign procedures in lieu of the procedural requirements provided in this policy.
50. Where ethics approval has been granted by another ethics committee, e.g. of another university, the Ethics Review Panel has the discretion to either accept this decision or request submission of an ethics application through the UL's normal procedure. This does not apply to the approval of the Luxembourgish national committees, whose decisions have to be accepted.

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