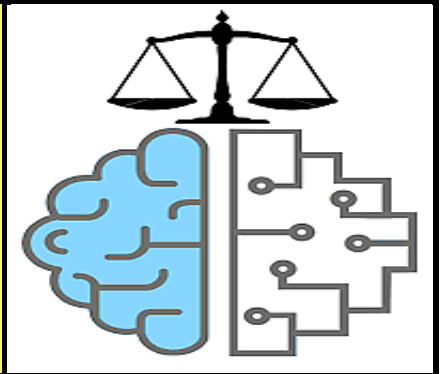




MAJU RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

(research with responsibility)

Version V1.0 (2021-25)



Mohammad Ali Jinnah University

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document serves as a formal policy instrument for promoting and ensuring ethically responsible research at the Muhammad Ali Jinnah University (MAJU). It provides key information to the researchers and research students on what constitutes fair and ethically acceptable research behavior. The policy also serves as a guiding document on how the matters and applications governing use of ethical practices and procedures in conducting research would be administered by the relevant ethics committee entrusted with the task of reviewing, evaluating and approving such applications at MAJU.

As suggested by HEC, MAJU has developed Research Ethics Policy and included it in the ORIC suite of policies as a formally enforced document. It should be used in conjunction with MAJU Research Code of Conduct and ORIC policy.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide a framework for governance and development of ethical research at MAJU.
- Promote principles and norms of the ethical research within the university as a priority.
- Promote use of ethical research practices by the MAJU research community as the key stakeholders.
- Establish fair and transparent system for evaluation and assessment of the research being done by the MAJU research community.
- Provide support tools, procedures and methods to the researchers in order to aid them in conducting their research in an effective and ethically responsible manner.
- Ensure that all the researchers, research students and other individuals involved in research get fair share of their research work.

3. SCOPE

The scope of this policy covers ethical aspects of all research being carried out at the Mohammad Ali Jinnah University (MAJU). Therefore, this policy is:

- 3.1. Applicable to all the faculty members, staff, students and other external parties (to be called collectively as researchers henceforth) involved in the research and development activities of all kinds at MAJU.
- 3.2. Supported by data management procedures and guidelines that are made available by MAJU Ethics Review Committee (MERC). Thus, the researcher including research students and their supervisor(s) must conduct and manage their research in line with this policy and the guidelines and procedures of MERC.

4. PURPOSE

This policy sets out guiding principles for conducting ethically responsible research at MAJU.

- 4.1. The ethics policy defines how research is executed and managed at MAJU. It helps in promoting a productive research culture for MAJU community of researchers.
- 4.2. The policy provides a framework for promoting ethically responsible research practices at MAJU.
- 4.3. The policy aims to foster original research and creation of new knowledge with an aim to promote socio-economic development of the country.

5. MAJU'S CORE PRINCIPLES ON RESEARCH ETHICS

This policy establishes following guiding principles for ensuring ethically responsible research practices at MAJU. It is important for all the researchers to be familiar with and adhere to these principles while executing research activities at the university.



- i. **INTEGRITY** in all research matters and activities right from research conception to end results.
- ii. **OBJECTIVITY** governing research planning, design, development, execution and reporting.
- iii. **ORIGINALITY** in terms of the data collected, methodologies applied, analyses conducted and results reported.
- iv. **RESPONSIBILITY** in the conduct of research and reporting of the research results.
- v. **FAIR PLAY** in treating with fairness and justice all the individuals involved in the research.
- vi. **RESPECT** for the participants and subjects of the research activities.
- vii. **RECOGNITION** of and giving due share to the individuals involved in the research activities.
- viii. **ADVOCACY** of the ethically sound research practices within and outside of the university.

6. MAJU POLICY STATEMENTS ON RESEARCH ETHICS

The MAJU is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research and fostering a strong culture of research ethics. Consistent with these and keeping in view the core principles, the researchers are expected to demonstrate credibility, integrity, impartiality and fairness when it comes to carrying-out research activities and collaborating with the others individuals and external organizations. This policy thus supports MAJU's principles on research ethics by:

- ✓ Promoting responsible research behavior within the university.
- ✓ Apprising all the researchers about their ethical research responsibilities, requirements and expectations.
- ✓ Supporting the creation and sharing of original research in an ethically responsible manner.
- ✓ Providing researchers this policy framework to conduct their research with responsibility and honesty.
- ✓ Promoting respect and fair treatment for all the individuals involved in the research at MAJU.
- ✓ Ensuring transparency and reliability of the research data and findings reported.

Besides the above, the university also fully supports the notion of equal opportunity, gender equality, fairness and social justice along with the provision of a supportive research environment. Hence, the policy necessitates that the researchers at the university:

- i. Treat research subjects, participants, associates and students with utmost politeness and fairness.
- ii. Must not engage in any discriminatory research behavior based on the gender, age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or cultural background.
- iii. Respect the privacy of the personal information & data collected and used while undertaking their research at the university.
- iv. Utilize MAJU procedures and guidelines governing secure handling and management of the research data.
- v. Build and maintain overall research reputation of the university.

7. MAJU RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL PROCESS

This ethos governing responsible research practices are built around an understanding that the researchers at MAJU are morally and professionally committed to undertake their research activities to the best of the ethical principles and practices so as to maintain better image of the university. However, this necessitates MAJU researchers to exercise due care in undertaking their research activities to the fullest of their abilities in a manner to responsibly and efficiently utilize MAJU resources.

Thus, all the research works, studies and projects involving humans and animals participants must be approved before their formal commencement. In this regard, the researchers and other individuals undertaking such researches are expected to seek informed consent of the participants before engaging them in any experiment or research study so as to safeguard the rights of the study participants and making sure that they are exposed to minimal or no risk. As a result, all such researches at MAJU involving human and animal subjects as participants are reviewed and approved by MAJU Ethics Review Committee (MERC). Consequently, the Researchers and Principal Investigators of the projects are required to comply with the requirements of and seek ethical approval from the MERC for their research work or studies involving:

- ✓ Human population &/or use of their personal information.

- ✓ Marginalized and sensitive segment of human population such as children, people with disabilities, individuals suffering from a particular ailment or other vulnerable people as research participants.
- ✓ Lab examinations, scientific investigations, clinical/non-clinical trials and other similar activities.
- ✓ Administration of drugs including other medical interventions and therapies.
- ✓ Experimental or scientific use of animals.
- ✓ Investigations and experimentations on microorganisms and pathogens.
- ✓ Use of biosafety materials, biological substances, toxic chemicals etc.
- ✓ Any other research studies involving medical, legal, scientific, technological, social, environmental risks or implications.

8. MAJU ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (MERC)

All research cases requiring ethical review shall be evaluated and approved by the MAJU Ethics Review Committee (MERC). The constitution of the committee will be as follow:

i.	President	Chairperson
ii.	Director (ORIC)	Secretary
iii. & iv.	Two Eminent Researchers from the Concerned Faculty to be nominated by Director (ORIC)	Member
v.	Manager (Research Development & Management)	Member

8.1. Functions and Powers of MERC

The primary functions of the MERC shall be to evaluate research applications and cases from the viewpoint of their ethical and legal viability through its panel of experts in the relevant field. Other key functions and powers of the MERC are as follow:

- a) Protect the rights and safety of the humans and animals as research subjects/participants.
- b) Assess all research studies yet to be undertaken by ensuring their overall adherence to safe and ethical research practices.
- c) Evaluate and ensure that the informed consent documents of the researchers such as research data collection documents, instruments and procedures are complete in all respects, particularly from the viewpoint of the research risks and benefits perceived.
- d) Review and approve all research cases involving human population and animals as research subject by ensuring their compliance with MERC guidelines and this policy.
- e) Probe unforeseen ethical issues & incidents including the evaluation of all research matters involving non-compliance with the MERC guidelines and the protocols enforced in this policy.
- f) Provide technical guidance and advice on the matters relating to research ethics to the MAJU researchers undertaking their research inside and outside of the university.
- g) Promote awareness within the MAJU community of researchers on what constitute ethics in research and issues governing ethical research.
- h) Stay abreast with the latest technological tools, methods, trends and regulations governing ethical research.

9. MANAGEMENT AND HANDLING OF RESEARCH DATA, RECORDS AND MATERIALS

- 9.1. The efficient research data management supports smooth execution of the research, thereby promoting the confidentiality of the individuals involved as research subjects. It is therefore crucial for the researchers to collect, store, utilize and manage all the research data, instruments, records and materials in a responsible and ethical manner.
- 9.2. All researchers must comply with the ethical clearance procedures, methods and guidelines set by MERC governing research data collection, use, management and disposal.
- 9.3. Any research involving data sharing with the parties external to MAJU, the researchers involved must execute in writing any such data sharing agreements. Such agreements should also incorporate procedures on how to continue to access data in the instances when a researcher leaves MAJU.

10. ETHICAL PROCEDURES ON PUBLISHING RESEARCH AND REPORTING OUTPUT

- 10.1. Research output denotes different forms of published research work and is as such critical to MAJU's academic ranking and overall reputation. Consequently, it is vital that the research outputs are reported honestly, accurately and responsibly to the best of research's ability and understanding. However, the only exception to this rule is the:
 - Intellectual, legal, ethical, confidentiality or commercial restrictions enforced as part of a separate third-party agreement that restricts sharing of any such data.
 - Confidential nature of research data and materials whose results are yet unpublished.
- 10.2. Researchers should carefully and objectively report on and share their research results.
- 10.3. Researchers should make smart choices while sending their manuscripts and unpublished research work to the research journals and conferences, thereby avoiding predatory publishers.
- 10.4. Principal Investigators and Lead Authors must give fair and judicious share of research authorships to the collaborating author(s) based on their level of intellectual contribution.
- 10.5. Researchers must appropriately acknowledge and give fair attribution to the individuals indirectly involved in, assisting or financially supporting the research.
- 10.6. The ideas, materials and information that are referred, used or adapted in a research work must be acknowledged in the references or separate acknowledgement section as appropriate.

11. DISPUTES RESOLUTION

In the instances where a dispute arises as a result of implementation of this policy that remains unresolved by the ORIC, the President MAJU at his discretion will form on an ad hoc basis a Mediator Committee to be comprised of 3 members from different faculties. The committee will probe the issue and hear the concerns of the individuals/parties under disputes. Based on its inquiry, the committee will submit its recommendations to the President for perusal and decision. The decision made by the President shall be deemed final and binding on the parties involved.

12. POLICY ENFORCEMENT AND FOCAL POINTS

12.1 Policy Enforcement

The Registrar and Deputy Registrar (Admin) will jointly enforce this policy and provide any secretarial support required in this respect. Any conflicts arising among the MAJU researchers governing use and interpretation of this policy would be handled by the Deputy Registrar (Admin) and/or Law officer. These officers will evaluate and clarify the policy from the legal point of view and make available the support procedures for resolving any such issues.

12.2. Policy Focal Points

- 12.2.1. MAJU Executive Committee members are responsible for implementing this policy in their respective departments, centers and offices as pertaining to them.
- 12.2.2. Deans in their respective faculties are responsible for advice on the matters relating to research ethics in line with this policy.
- 12.2.3. Registrar and Dean (Academics) are responsible for advice on the matters relating to research ethics in the development of academic programs, teaching plans, prospectus, curricula and related documents.
- 12.2.4. The Director (ORIC) and the Manager (RDM) are responsible in particular for overall revision of this policy (as and when required).

13. POLICY COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

Once the policy is officially approved and implemented at MAJU, the Research Development and Management (RD&M) Section of ORIC shall promote awareness about this policy. Such initiatives may include communicating the policy on email, arranging training workshops for MAJU research community and uploading the same at ORIC website for the information of all the university stakeholders.

14. POLICY COMPLAINTS AND BREACHES

Complaints relating to the research integrity or potential breach of this policy as reported to the Director (ORIC) would be handled in line with the MAJU relevant Code of Conduct. All such breaches would be scrutinized by the MERC that would recommend president to initiate action that may result in the sanctions &/or termination of the appointment.

15. POLICY INFORMATION

15.1. Policy Approvals

Policy Custodians	Deputy Registrar (Admin)
Responsible Officers	Director (ORIC) Manager (RDM) – (ORIC)
Policy Approving Authority	MAJU Executive Committee followed by the President
Next Review Date (if required)	August 2025

15.2. Policy History

Version	V1.0 (2021-25)
Approval Date	30 June 2021
Effective Date	01 July 2021

15.3. Policy Subsidiary Documents

The Research Development & Management (RD&M) Section of ORIC shall formulate and maintaining procedures, guidelines and other documents relating to this policy.

15.4. Policy Updates & Improvements

This policy is subject to improvements and amendments in future, for instance, to incorporate international trends and modern principles governing ethical and responsible research practices. Any changes to this policy affecting MAJU community of researchers would be subject to feedback from MERC before implementing such changes. In normal circumstances, the policy would be revised after every 5 years.

15.5. How to Read this Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with MAJU Research Code of Conduct and ORIC policy.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following applicable key terms convey their meaning in the context of this policy.

Biosafety Materials: These may include but are not limited to infectious materials, pathogens, harmful chemicals and toxic substances.

MAJU Research Community: This includes researchers, faculty members, research associates, research students and other individuals involved in all kind of research at MAJU.

Policy: A formal regulatory instrument on a particular subject or domain that guides organizational course of actions and strategic decision-making through a well-established set of procedures.

Predatory Publisher: The exploitative publishers that target researchers (particularly the young researchers) and convince them to publish their research work with them. These outlets usually don't follow peer-review process and other criteria governing quality of research publications.

Principal Investigator (PI): A lead researcher having an overall responsibility of managing a research project right from research proposal writing, applying for funding, project planning, execution, monitoring, completion and reporting.

Research Activities: Refer to the set of tasks or actions involving evaluation, synthesis or analysis of the objects, data and materials in a manner to generate new knowledge and understandings that may take the form of ideas, thoughts, concepts, methods etc.

Research Collaboration: This means research cooperation or partnership done by a researcher or group of researchers with others individuals or groups internal or external to the university. Research collaboration at MAJU is done internally at the level of individual researchers, and externally with industry, government organizations, R&D institutions and not-for-profit communities.

Research Data: Data gathered as part of a research study and analyzed to establish findings and form conclusions. The data could be digital, analog, simulation-based, experimental materials etc.

Research Documents: Means any information or documentation created and used by the researchers as part of their research work or scholarly efforts. These may include: research projects, proposals, reports, grant applications, information sheets and consent forms for research participants, research management plans and related documents.

Research Output: Denotes research produced and published in different forms. Research output produced at MAJU usually takes two forms. Conventional (such as: journal articles, conference papers, monographs, books, research reports etc.) and non-conventional output (for example artistic works, creative designs, drawings, industry consultancy reports).

Research Project: Means a research document or plan having set objective, methodology, budget, resources and an expected outcome in terms of creation of new knowledge or contribution to theory &/or practice.

Research Proposal: Means a research project, idea or concept being proposed by a researcher. Research proposals are usually developed by MAJU researchers as part of their application for competitive research funding/grants such as the ones provided by HEC, PSF, IGNITE etc.

Researcher: An individual who originates, develops, examines, investigates, contributes or presents a novel concept, new idea, intellectual efforts, original scholarly work etc.