The Policy of Scientific Research and its Ethics at the Arab Open University

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Contents

Introduction

This document is divided into two parts:
1) The Policy of Scientific Research at the Arab Open University
2) The Bylaws of Scientific Research Code of Ethics at the Arab Open University

Article 1: Title

This document shall be called: "The Policy of Scientific Research and its Ethics at the Arab Open University."

Part One:

The Scientific Research Policy

Article 2: Reasons and Objectives of the Policy

As the University gradually transforms from an educational institution to an educational research institution, there is a need to formulate a research policy that identifies the priorities and responsibilities of scientific research as well as stimulating research projects. This policy should also define the research management system and procedures to improve the performance of the University and its research capabilities.

Stimulating research projects to AOU are presented in detail in the document: "Research Grants Policy at the Arab Open University." As for the ethical aspects and controls of professional scientific research, these will be presented in the second part of this document.

Article 3: Research Types and Priorities

In general, research is defined as any sort of fact-finding in an organized manner aimed at contributing to the development of human knowledge. There are four types of research, namely:
1) Basic Research
2) Strategic Research
3) Applied Research
4) Experimental Research

Basic research and experimental research aim at "building new theoretical or empirical knowledge, where the process of thinking systematically stimulates about the causes of certain

natural or human phenomena to achieve the fundamental objective of increasing knowledge for understanding." (1)

As for applied research, it is "the real research for new knowledge directed specifically at a specific practical goal." (2)

Taking into account the current stage of the research development process at the University and efforts to contribute effectively to the economic and social development of the local community (including civil society and both the public and private sectors), AOU prioritizes applied research. Even though internal University grants attach a particular importance to applied research, this does not mean that other types of research are to be completely undermined.

The University should identify some areas of strategic research (applied) at the different colleges. The areas include aspects that constitute sources of research power capable of attracting sufficient numbers of researchers from all branches to form the required research cluster. Such research also has the potential and ability to obtain and attract third parties for the purpose of cooperation and/or funding, which is an important aspect of the local community development.

Article 4: Responsibility of Faculty Members and the University

The contribution to the development of human knowledge through high quality research is an essential element of the University mission. It is also in line with University aspirations and strategy. Therefore, all full-time faculty members must conduct research. The University research classification is dependent on the total researches carried out by faculty members and other University employees and students. The largest share of research contribution is attributed to faculty members whom contribute to the development of knowledge that in turn enhances and enriches the learning experiences of students.

Research conduct and publishing is one of the conditions stipulated in the contract between the University and full-time faculty members and is an essential element in the contract renewal process.

Faculty members are keen to develop themselves personally and professionally, in turn the University is committed to providing support for the development of its staff. As for the research aspect in the development of University staff and the development of research projects in general, the University conducts the following:
• Establishing and building appropriate administrative structures and infrastructure in order to support research activities and continuing education.

- Initiating plans to develop research that is consistent with the University mission and strategies, and providing a conducive environment to the implementation of these plans.
- Providing grants and other incentives to encourage innovative research.
- Developing and providing a secure research environment that takes into consideration the ethics of conducting research.
- Increasing the number of employees, their continuity, and their opportunities to excel in the field of research.

Article 5: Research Development and Management

The management and development of research involves several circles which complement one another:
1) The Principal Researcher
2) The Dean and the Research Development Committee at the Deanship (College)
3) The Scientific Research Committee at the University in the country branch
4) The Higher Committee for Scientific Research
5) The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research
6) The Central Research Office

First: The Principal Researcher

A) The principal researcher is responsible for conducting research, providing the direct supervisor with a progress report, and publishing the results. In his/her primary capacity to conduct the research, the principal researcher must undertake an administrative responsibility (project management) and an academic responsibility.

   1) On the administrative side, the principal researcher shall:
   - Identify funding opportunities (if required by the research).
   - Prepare the request for support in consultation with the University's designated bodies and ensure compliance with ethical and security standards in addition to other regulations and laws required by the University and the sponsor/funder.
   - Manage funding in compliance with the applicable and agreed laws, and submit the required financial reports.
   - Report on the research progress and propose any changes or differences from the agreed research conditions, should there be any, emphasizing the need to obtain prior approval if such differences have an impact on the agreement.
   - Oversee all administrative aspects of the project and assume their consequences as responsibilities.

2) On the academic side, responsibilities include the following:
- Determining the scope of work.
- Selecting the team members.
- Supervising all stages and aspects of the work and ensuring that it follows the established plan and within the research ethics enforced at AOU, whilst maintaining the highest level of professionalism and quality.
- Preparing reports according to the funder's directives whilst applying the highest standards of quality, as well as publishing the results in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.
- Making the necessary arrangements with the concerned parties in the University regarding intellectual property, as necessary.

B) Some research projects need more than one principal researcher, especially when the research is branched in terms of subjects, disciplines and/or geographical distribution. It is difficult for one researcher to manage the project on her/his own. Hence, it is possible that some projects may require the appointment of an assistant researcher for the principal researcher.

Second: The Dean and the Research Development Committee at the Deanship (College)

A) The Dean has the full authority to encourage faculty members at the Deanship (college) to engage in research activities. The Dean forms the Research Development Committee which represents the branches, and is composed of high-academic-rank faculty members whom are active in conducting researches.

B) The tasks of the Research Development Committee include:
- Organizing periodic seminars on research methods (and their development globally) and as serving of the specializations represented by the college.
- Preparing research plans in line with the University mission and strategies, and the strategy of the College, in addition to supporting, monitoring, and following-up on the implementation of these plans.
- Facilitating the formation of research groups between branches to carry out a specific or long-term projects, and reporting on application submissions for acquiring external funding, and obtaining funding from the Central Regulatory for Research Development.
- Assisting faculty members in identifying sources of funding through the preparation of a list and providing information on external funding agencies related to research conducted by the College.
- Supporting junior academic staff through a training project on conducting and supervising researches.

- Encouraging cooperation with researchers from other universities, research centers and the community.
- Stimulating and encouraging interdisciplinary and multi-faceted researches at the branch level, as well as among branches.
- Submitting periodic reports to the VPAA&SR through the Dean.

Third: The Scientific Research Committee at The University Branch

A) The committee is composed of faculty members of the highest academic level whom are active in research. The Director/Rector appoints the head and members of the committee. Additionally, all branch colleges are represented in this committee.

B) The Scientific Research Committee at the University in the country branch shall undertake the following tasks:

- Organizing seminars on University policies, and preparing research manuals. This committee may request assistance from the Higher Committee for Scientific Research or the Office of the VPAA&SR.
- Ensuring training of the research grants administrators who will assist applicants in acquiring internal and external support (the training process should be centralized).
- Announcing research projects for internal grants, receiving, and selecting the research projects (refer to Research Grants Policy and Contract Management).
- Gathering information on local research funding agencies and encouraging requests for external funding from within and outside the country branch.
- Using the electronic portal for research in the branch in all issued and received correspondence and information.

Fourth: Higher Committee for Scientific Research

A) The Higher Committee for Scientific Research is responsible for supervising and managing research projects at the University. The committee includes high academic rank faculty members who are responsible for the development of research, as well as the VPAA&SR and the Deans. This committee is supported by the Central Research Office.

B) The tasks of the Higher Committee for Scientific Research include the following:

- Reviewing and supporting plans for research development in the colleges, and providing advice and consultancy.
- Managing the central scholarships of the University assigned to it (for more details see the Open University Research Grants Policy as well as the Research Grants and Contract Management Manual).
- Building and developing strategic research partnerships with other universities, research institutes and key institutions in the community, as well as regional and international development agencies.

- Seeking funding opportunities from charitable organizations as well as agencies specializing in the development and support of research projects.
- Organizing conferences and seminars on contemporary issues related to the interests of the University.
- Encouraging and supporting research projects among branches and colleges.
- Training of research grants administrators in branches (at least two from each branch) as well as at the headquarters, to assist faculty members in selecting projects and applying for internal and external support.
- Assisting the research committees in the branches in organizing seminars on the research policies of the University and its guide when asked to do so.
- Receiving and sharing feedback on periodic reports issued by the research development committees at the college and in the branch on the progress made.
- Using the electronic portal for research in all issued and received correspondence and information.

Fifth: Role of the VPAA&SR at the Scientific Research Level

A) The VPAA&SR shall be responsible to the President for all research projects at the University through the administrative and technical support received by the Vice President from the Central Research Office and other entities.

B) The VPAA&SR shall assume the following tasks:
- Formulates research strategies, policies, laws and regulations and submits them through the President to obtain the approval of the concerned authorities at the University.
- Prepares the central budget for research and expenditure control in line with the general framework of the budget and the laws and financial regulations in force.
- Chairs the Higher Committee for Scientific Research.
- Receives reports on research activities from Deans, branch Director/Rectors and the Central Research Office.
- Reports on research activities to the concerned authorities at the University through the President.
- Manages the intellectual property rights at the University in collaboration with the Central Research Office.

Sixth: Central Research Office

A) The Central Research Office is the central unit for the management and coordination of research activities at the University. The Office provides administrative and technical support to the VPAA&SR and the Higher Committee for Scientific Research.

B) The Central Research Office carries out the following tasks:

- Gathers reports from the Research Development Committee of the College and the Research Development Committee in the branches and prepares them for submission to the VPAA&SR and to the Higher Committee for Scientific Research.
- Monitors compliance with internal rules and those established by the supporter/sponsor entity/person for all research projects submitted for external funding. The Center also examines and manages applications for internal funding submitted to the Higher Committee for Scientific Research (see the Open University Research Grants Policy).
- Sets up a centralized list and gathers information about supporting agencies to support research of interest to AOU in the University branch countries and at the regional and international levels in cooperation with the committees of scientific research in the branches and the research development committees in colleges. In addition, it works to make that list available and that information available through the research electronic portal.
- Manages headquarters research portal content.
- Assists in organizing the process of training on the research manual and policies in branches as needed.

Article 6: Research Values and Social Responsibility

A) The University must create a research environment that respects moral values and cultural aspects. The environment should provide transparency, objectivity, confidentiality, safety, integrity and justice, in addition to promoting responsibility and social responsibility.

B) While researchers have the freedom to choose research subjects and methods of collecting data to reach results, they must fully adhere to the above values in pursuing research methods and conducting research and results (see the Code of Conduct and Ethics of Research).

C) When conducting research, researchers must comply with all University policies, rules and procedures, as well as with the conditions set by the sponsor for externally supported research. The results of their efforts must be subject to scrutiny by their colleagues.

D) All researchers whether faculty members, students or any other researcher conducting research on behalf of AOU shall receive training on how to conduct the research responsibly. The Deans and the committees of scientific research in the colleges, as well as Director/ Rectors and the scientific research committee at the University in the country branch should ensure that researchers obtain adequate training in this area, through training by all possible means (electronic or face-to-face) in groups.

Article 7: Evolution in the Conduct of Research

A) Because dissemination of knowledge is one of the University's main objectives, the University is committed to the evolution and diversity of the research process and believes that the results of the research should be available to all through publication or any other means. However, this vision of the University may need to be scrutinized and investigated if The University or the external funding agency had the intellectual property right, and the need to protect intellectual property value that could likely be commercial in nature requires a delay in the publication process. In this case, the delay and duration of the delay shall be agreed upon in the agreement with the financier.

B) The University does not accept faculty members or students to conduct researches on its campus or use its funding/support which is confidential. If the researcher or University receives confidential essential information from the funding agency or a third party, the confidentiality obligation and the privacy of such information should not prevent the right to publish the results of the research, or else this data should not be used.

C) It is the responsibility of the Principal Researcher to inform the authorities of the University of any information in accordance with the confidentiality of the terms of agreement with an external funding agency prior to the signing of the agreement. If the funding agency is given the right to publish the results of the research and any amendments have been made without the consent of the researcher and the University, it is the right of the University and researcher to remove their names from the list of researchers participating in the research.

Article 8: Ownership and Preservation of Research Records

A) Research records must be properly saved and documented. This is the primary responsibility of the Principal Researcher and the University. These two parties are entitled to use these records. If there is no other agreement with the sponsor, the ownership resulting from the research conducted under the supervision and care of the University will belong to it.

B) Research records shall include documents, records and research materials that are essential for the purpose of documentation, reconstruction of research, evaluation and investigation of the research results, events and procedures leading to the acquisition of such documents (3).

C) These records include -within other forms- administrative information (original, photocopied or electronic), documents, recorded text correspondence or interviews (blog or audio).

D) The responsibility of the University -and not necessarily an exclusive responsibility- involves maintaining the records when needed for the following reasons (4):

• Commitment to agreements signed with funding agencies.
• Protection of intellectual property resulting from research.
• Ensure that the business is managed properly including the human element.

- Facilitate and ease the verification of the absence of any violations of professional behavior and ethics.
- Maintain the rights of those involved in the research processes to access information and records.

Records must be maintained throughout the period in which these uncertainties remain, and the records of students shall be kept until they graduate. When the researchers leave the University, they are entitled to take copies of their research records, but not the originals. If the principal researcher moves to another institution before the completion of the project, and there are no arrangements to complete the research within the University, the records can be transferred to the new institution with the approval of the President.

Article 9: Research Leave

A) A faculty member may apply for research leave with the approval of the University Director/ Rector, in consultation with the concerned Dean and the Scientific Research Committee at the University, if the following conditions are met:
   1) The faculty member has spent at least 6 consecutive years in the service of the University at the beginning of the date of the request for leave.
   2) The faculty member should have a solid research plan leading to the production of high-quality research.
   3) The faculty member must have a good research record during her/his service at the University.
   4) The AOU branch Director/Rector and the head of the unit shall make the necessary arrangements, without any financial implications, to cover his/her teaching duties and any administrative responsibilities during the leave.
B) The duration of the research leave may be up to 12 months in which the faculty member receives 75% of his/her full salary. The remaining 25% is deferred until completion of the leave period according to what is customary and to the highest extent. The faculty member must submit a report within three months of the leave termination.
C) If the Rector and the Dean are positive about the proper implementation of the leave plan, then the 25% deferred salary shall be paid. If no agreement is reached between the Dean and the branch Rector, the President shall make the appropriate decision. The faculty member should sign a commitment to serve the University for two years after the research leave. The University may decide whatever it deems appropriate on whether to continue to contract with the faculty member or not.

Researches play a pivotal role in the development and enhancement of the research aspect of the University and in achieving its mission. Research centers actively contribute to enriching academic life and increasing interaction with the local community, as well as building new and fruitful relationships in various fields and disciplines.

First: Principles

The following pertains to the general principles governing the establishment of research centers at AOU.

• The AOU Research Centre is an officially established University unit. Its establishment must be approved by the University's Board of Trustees, according to the following:

2) The research centre should have a professional message and clear objectives that are consistent with the University's mission and objectives and with the college's strategy if centers are established within a particular college.

3) The centre should be multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in its nature, but not necessarily so, and shall witness cooperation between faculties and branches.

4) The center should include a number of researchers at the University, so that they have knowledge of the University's goals and scope of work, and are committed to allocate part of their time for this purpose.

5) The center should have adequate funding sources and should be able to bring in external funding.

6) The center should cooperate with researchers from other universities, other research centers, civil society organizations and industry.

7) The center can be established in partnership with another institute or other institutions.

8) The center should not have to appoint new full-time faculty members, as it is not usually required.

9) The center should focus on, and contribute mainly to, research. However, research, training and/or consultancy services can be combined to recover costs.

Second: Governance

The research center shall:

1) Have its own regulations, specifying the mission, objectives, geographic location, partnerships, membership, limits of liability, Board composition and its meetings, as well as clarifying the manner of appointment and selection of the Director/Rector. In addition to disclosure of funding sources and systems for the delivery and reporting of information.

2) Be managed by its Board of Director/Rectors on the recommendation of the President and with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

3) Have a manager responsible to the Dean, whom shall also be responsible to the VPAA&SR if the Center is established within the college. Otherwise, the manager shall be directly responsible to the VPAA&SR.
4) Be subject to successive reviews whose nature and manner shall be detailed in the regulations.
5) Fully define the terms, responsibilities and rights of membership.
6) Mention the name and logo of the University next to its name.

Article 11: Intellectual Property Rights

This section includes the University's policy towards intellectual property rights for the work done by faculty members and students.

First: Copyright, Patents and Invention (5)

The copyright concept is: "the possession and control of intellectual property in the original works that are created." Being subject to certain limitations and expectations, the copyright owner has the absolute right to reproduce the work, derive other works from it, distribute the copies by sale, and to publicly display or implement the work.

• An invention is defined as a good or useful idea related to operations, machines, manufacturers and materials.

• A patent is an authorization issued by a government or a consortium of governments (such as the European Union) that grants the inventor the right, except for others, to produce, use or sell the invention within the limits of the authorization government.

Second: Property, Disclosure and Governance (6)

A) The University reserves the right to own the copyright in the following cases:
   1) University-funded works.
   2) Works initiated by the University for specific purposes.
   3) Works that have been produced over a period of time, building on the results of the work of a group of faculty members and/or students.
   4) Scientific material of the courses.
   5) Works produced by faculty members of the University and its students mainly using University materials.
   6) Works produced by University staff within the scope of their regular employment.
B) In all such cases, the employees of the University and its students who make the authorizations shall have the copyright for their work, unless such rights are granted and given to a third party.

C) Ownership of works by external persons or institutions employed by the University as consultants or contractors to such persons shall not be affected unless otherwise indicated in the agreement.

D) Authors may request a re-transfer of copyright ownership of their works which the University has retained for one of the reasons stated above. In such a case, the President shall be the authority to approve or reject the transfer. In the case of approval, the University shares with the author any returns from this work.

E) The authors retain moral rights in their work which is under the ownership of the University. They have the right to use it for non-profit purposes, but they are not entitled to transfer it to a third party unless the President approves such transfer. In such case, the third party is not entitled to use it for commercial purposes.

F) If the authors estimate that their business has the potential to become commercially valuable, they must fill out a disclosure form indicating the nature of intellectual property and how such works can be of commercial interest to the University. The University will then decide what it deems appropriate if it claims ownership of the intellectual property, participation therein, licensing them or assigning them to the authors.

G) The Department of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is managed and supervised by the VPAA&SR and the Central Research Office. If the authors object to the decision of the VPAA&SR, they can appeal the decision to the President, who in turn forms a committee to meet with the author and raise its recommendation to the President to make the final decision.

Article 12: The Research Electronic Portal

The research electronic portal (e-portal) is a repository of all information related to research at AOU. The portal provides access to all research policies and booklets, and allows research projects to be monitored and followed up for further progress (see AOU Research Grants Policy).

• Colleges and branches can use the e-portal to send electronic research reports, through a form available on the portal.

• The e-portal can be used in all correspondence related to research activities at AOU. It should be noted that the section of the portal that contains a list of completed research is still under preparation, in addition to other materials aimed at announcing the publication of the results of research conducted at AOU.

Academic freedom means freedom of teaching and learning, research follow-up without undue interference, restrictions of law, institutional regulations, or public pressure.

Freedom of research means the freedom of researchers to investigate any subject of intellectual and human interest and to present results in an occupational and professional manner without any control or censorship. However, integrity, accountability and responsibility for research are the cornerstones of any research institution whether academic or non-academic, and the violation of well-known research standards and research principles is a major affront to both the research institution and the community seeking to develop knowledge.

In recognition of the importance of the principles that define research ethics, the Arab Open University identifies through this part the ethics of its scientific research. These principles apply to all; faculty, students, and anyone who uses the University's facilities for the purpose of carrying out supported or unsupported research.

This section aims to encourage and maintain sound research practices by providing clear scientific principles for reviewing the research ethics procedures at the Arab Open University.

While scientific research is defined as any kind of systematic research and investigation that contributes to the development of human knowledge, the ethic of scientific research is the application of ethical principles and professional conduct regulations governing research from planning to data collection and analysis to announcement and dissemination of results.

Commitment to ethical principles leads to the achievement of research objectives and results, and adherence to these principles promotes objectivity and originality in research in order to achieve the highest standards.

As the process of research is based on the collective effort and coordination between individuals and institutions, ethical principles such as justice, trust, respect, confidentiality and shared responsibility to protect collaborators, both at the individual and institutional levels, reinforce the values that are essential to collective action.

The implementation of ethical principles and rules confirms the commitment of researchers to the principle of accountability to public opinion by avoiding behaviors that harms scientific research and providing ways of dealing with it if it occurs. In addition to defining (and disposing

of) conflict of interest, the protection of members of the research sample and treating animals with care are also important principles of accountability.

As the process of adhering to ethical and professional standards for research helps support the research process, institutions often support and fund research projects if they are proven to be of quality and integrity. Many ethical standards in research aim to promote many social and ethical values. In general, the ethics of scientific research at AOU address ethical issues related to non-clinical research only.

Article 13: Ethical Principles of Good Practice

First: Purpose and Scope
- Research ethics regulations at AOU aim to provide the standards and principles of proper practice in all faculties and branches of the University.
- The regulations' provisions shall apply to anyone who carries out research duties at the University or on its behalf, including faculty members, students, visiting professors, colleagues and advisers.
- These regulations define the University's commitment to the development of laws governing the research process. Additionally, and through the University's systems, laws and policies, these regulations empower all researchers to identify the ethical, practical and intellectual challenges that accompany the pursuit of excellence in scientific research.

Second: Essential Ethical Values
Below is a set of general ethical values and practices that apply not only to scientific and academic researchers in general, but to all aspects of social behavior. They have been highlighted in this section due to their relevance to scientific research.

A) Honesty and Transparency:
Honesty and transparency are essential factors in the relationship between the researcher, the research sample and other interested parties. The researchers should be honest and transparent about their own and others' research. They must ensure that the research objectives, designs, methodologies, data and results are scrutinized in terms of their compliance with the laws of protection and confidentiality, in addition to being justified on the moral front.

Researchers should also ensure the accuracy of the data and the validity of the results, in addition to recognizing the contributions of others and not committing any irregularities or omissions. Participants should also have the opportunity to view the results of their research, and share their statements if appropriate. Institutions should also work to create a culture that establishes the principles of honesty and transparency in scientific research.

B) Integrity and Objectivity

General principles of integrity and objectivity are essential in all research activities. Integrity and objectivity must be available when conducting research. Being bias and prejudice should be avoided when designing experiments, conducting observations, analyzing data and interpreting results. The fabrication and falsification of ideas, data or research results for and/or by any party is considered a violation of accepted scientific research principles, and this behavior is categorically rejected.

Researchers should ensure that the research is properly reviewed, administrative and funding approvals are obtained, and is in accordance to the ethics of scientific research at both the internal level, i.e. University, and the external level.

Researchers must disclose any real or potential conflict of interest, including disclosure of personal or financial interests that may affect the research. They should seek advice and take the necessary steps to resolve it.

Research work is ethically and professionally justified if there is a reasonable probability that the community (part of which are members taken as a sample) will benefit from the results of this research. As for the accountability on whether the research was conducted impartially or not, rests with the researcher.

C) Justice and non-Discrimination

The ethical principle of distributive justice is based on the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of the research within a particular group. Vulnerable individuals whom are unable to protect their interests must not be exploited for research activities. Research participants should not be selected simply because they are available, or because they are easy to lead and control due to their personal, social and/or economic circumstances. Distributive justice requires non-discrimination against individuals or groups who can benefit from developments in scientific research.

Researchers should not discriminate in their selection or exclusion of participants unless the decision to select or exclude a particular group is necessary for research purposes such as race, age, disability, religion, sex, social status, occupation, marital status, language, religious belief, moral ideals, and political views.

When selecting a research team, researchers should not discriminate against colleagues or students on any grounds. The focus should be on scientific competence and integrity.

D) Legitimacy and Accountability

It is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of all governmental policies, as well as any legal, administrative and ethical requirements, including practices regulations by professional bodies in the countries where any aspect of the research is being conducted. They must also ensure that any undertaken research complies with the agreements and the terms of the research project, in addition to having auditable, monitor-able and inspect-able records available at all times. All researchers, whether they are individuals or institutions should be aware that throughout their period of work, they are accountable to the public and must act accordingly.

E) Social Responsibility and Cultural Sensitivity

Researchers must work to improve social conditions and to prevent or mitigate social damage through research. Research is morally successful if it has a role in knowledge development and benefits the community. In order to carry out researches in communities outside his/her area, the researcher must respect the attitudes, values, accountability systems, articles and actions that form the culture and customs of other societies. Above all, it is necessary to obtain the approval and support of the group that will participate in the study before the start of field work.

Cultural sensitivity in the process of research means respecting the decision of groups to not participate or to not want to continue participating at any time. If the research is to obtain information and material based on interpersonal trust, then the rights, interests, and cultural as well as intellectual property of the participants must be preserved. The contributions of the group(s) involved should also be recognized and demonstrated when the results are published.

F) Confidentiality

Personal information concerning individuals shall be treated with full confidentiality and guarantees. If this condition is violated, the case may be referred to a civil court. Where possible, participants should know how their information will be used and have an opinion on its usage. It is essential that anyone who has access to the data, other than researchers and supervisors, sign a confidentiality agreement.

It is common for researchers to take explicit consent from each participant to obtain, retain and use their personal information. Personal information should be encoded as early as possible. It should be noted that the issue of confidentiality is not absolute in law, and may be overridden in exceptional cases in matters as important as protecting individuals from harm. As the limits of confidentiality increase, potential participants must be informed of the nature of these limits, and these should be specified in the protocol/charter of the research.

G) Respecting Others

The concept of respect involves recognizing the dignity and beliefs of people (including cultural and religious beliefs), as well as the confidentiality and independence of the persons involved in the research, whether they are members of the research sample or research colleagues. These persons have the right and freedom to decide whether to participate or not in the research or to withdraw from it without providing reasons.

Third: Ethical Principles of Good Practices

The principles and general ethical principles referred to above affect all aspects of research and must be adhered to. The ethical principles of good practices are deeply rooted in all stages of research, and are organized from designing the research, data collection and processing, until the dissemination and publishing of results. This section also covers any irregularities or disputes that arise during the research process.

1) Excellence

Institutions and researchers must work to elevate research and strive for excellence by planning and conducting high-level research while applying and upholding high ethical standards.

2) Authenticity

Authenticity in scientific research means excellence before all; original research projects become intellectual ammunition that contributes to the development of human knowledge. Researchers must do their best to prove the authenticity of their research objectively and accurately. They must acknowledge the results of the research conducted by other researchers, and they must, morally and legally, respect the intellectual property rights of other researchers.

3) Impersonation / Literary Plagiarism

Researchers may not—and with their knowledge—use published or unpublished works by others as their own research nor may they assist anyone else in doing so. It is customary for the researcher to document the use of any works whether performed by him/herself or other researchers.

Literary theft falls under the so-called lack of academic honesty, which is considered an offense that requires the most disciplinary punishment. Students' impersonation and plagiarism practices are dealt with in accordance with student regulations and policies in this regard.

Anyone from inside or outside the University can report any case of plagiarism by any of the University staff. This should be brought to the attention of the University President whom in turn will form a committee of inquiry. Based on the results of the investigation, the appropriate procedures shall be taken in accordance with the disciplinary regulations of the University staff.

4) Research Using Human Samples

Human specimens are those living or dead persons whose data is obtained by the researcher. Data is obtained using the following methods:

• Direct communication.

• Questionnaires or recorded oral interviews.

• Through stored data (databases).

When conducting research on human samples, researchers must reduce damage and risk while maximizing benefits, such as respect for human dignity, confidentiality, independence, taking care of people at risk, and fair distribution of research benefits and burdens.

5) Protection from Damage

Researchers should do their utmost to minimize the risks of any physical or psychological harm to any participant, researcher, institution, financial institution or any other person or entity involved. Each research project should conduct a risk analysis. If there is high risk, a risk management strategy and damage reduction measures should be developed in the protocols and the stated in the research charter.

Some research projects may pose risks to the researcher. However, these risks should be identified and minimized. Safety factors should especially be considered when the interviewer conducts interviews individually. The researcher should be aware that the research may cause damage to communities, societies and/or institutions when drawing the results. The impact of inevitable risks and damage, including potential harassment of participants, is measured by valuing the potential benefits that will accrue to the participants and the local community. In determining to what degree a research is committed to ethical standards, it is important to consider risks and harmful factors as well as assessing their possible effects.

6) Prior Approval

Researchers should give people who are expected to participate in the research information about the nature of the research project and its purpose in a way that they understand. Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the participants are aware of the nature of the research, the extent to which they have participated in it, and that they have agreed to participate of their own volition. The research process must include a procedure for obtaining approval. In the request for ethical approval, researchers should discuss how to obtain and clarify prior consent. Verbal consent may be obtained, especially if it is consistent with the prevailing culture or if the participant was not able to provide written consent because of a disability, or that it may cause him/her some risks, or any other reason that prevents documentation approval in writing.

Participants have the right to withdraw their consent for participation at any time. Engaging in research under certain circumstances without consent, such as research of a confidential nature, requires separate justification.

7) Data

Data includes methodology for obtaining results, actual research results, and analysis and interpretation by researchers. The integrity of any research relies on the integrity of its data and information management in all aspects including data collection, usage and sharing with others. All researchers should be keen to provide integrity in their research record.

The collection of data and research materials must be done safely and fairly, and researchers may not publish any data as true when they realize or acknowledge that it is in fact false or is the result of deliberate fraud. Researchers should be very clear about themselves and others regarding the methodology used in data collection and analysis. A critical decision on the method of selection and analysis should be made before research initiation, where possible. Data must also be organized in a way that is easy to verify and validate.

Stemming from the principle of confidentiality and the laws that respect intellectual property and the need and importance of obtaining data, in exceptional cases, provided that the data has been published, it must be easily accessible to any entity that makes a logical and reasonable request while providing justification for the need to review and/or examine the data. If there is a conflict or disagreement between the researcher and the requesting party/entity, the matter shall be referred to the committee of research ethics.

8) Joint Research / with an External Party

In the case of joint research with another institution, the principal researcher in each of the cooperating institutions must obtain the necessary approval from his/her institution. In consideration to the research team members and the participants, any researcher participating in a joint research shall uphold the ethics of scientific research.

If the research is conducted in another country, the researchers must adhere to the laws, regulations, and prevailing culture in that country. However, adherence to the ethical principles of the country in which the research is taking place does not substitute the requirement to obtain AOU's approval of ethical conduct in scientific research.

9) Publishing Results

There is a moral obligation that the researchers publish their findings correctly and responsibly, as they are familiar with and are aware of the consequences of publishing the results to the open

media. Research results that do not comply with the principles stipulated in these regulations may not be published.

The dissemination of research results is necessary as a means of communication with specialists worldwide so that researchers can benefit from the results of the research and build on it. Additionally, all participants in the research should get the results of that research.

10) Authoring

Published research should indicate the role and efforts of all authors in carrying out the research. In the case of more than one author who actively contributed to the research, the decision to order the names must reflect the contribution of each author to the research. In the absence of agreement between researchers (including students), the following rules of authorship shall be applied:

- The authoring process includes all persons involved in the research whom are responsible and accountable for the results.
- The order of the names of the authors depends on the quality of the contribution and the extent of responsibility and accountability in relation to the results and customs used in this field.
- A person having an administrative-only relationship to the research (such as providing technical support, materials or facilities) does not qualify that person to be a co-author.
- Being an author is not affected by the fact that the researchers have been paid for their research contribution or their job position.
- AOU does not recognize honorary authorship.

If joint research is mainly based on students' dissertations for a Master's or doctorate, students should be given priority in arranging the names of the participating authors. Finally, research contributors must agree on how to distribute the rights of authoring and publishing among themselves.

11) Misconduct

Misuse of scientific research means any attempt or actual behavior, including collusion with others and facilitating or exploiting them through fabrication, forgery, plagiarism and/or deception when proposing the research project, conducting the research, announcing its results, or deviating from the correct methods of conducting research, whether as a result of negligence or deliberate intent.

Misuse includes failure to follow the proper and customary procedures for conducting research, especially if this failure causes damage to other humans, vertebrates or the environment. It also includes unauthorized use, disclosure, deletion or damage to the property of others' research.

Misconduct does not include unintended error or unintended variations in design, implementation, interpretation, or judgment in the evaluation of the research methodology or its results, or abuse that is not related to the research procedures. It does not include low-level research and student work that is examined and audited, which falls within the disciplinary regulations for students. As for the details of how scientific research is conducted, it is often only known to project personnel, so detection of misconduct only comes from people close to the project.

The issue of reporting misconduct in scientific research is the duty of all members of the academic community, whether they are from within or outside the institution. Reports on such cases should be submitted to the vice President for planning and development, or to any branch Director/Rectors at the University whom in turn will submit them to the competent authority at the University for investigation. All reports are treated with as much confidentiality as possible, and no criminal/disciplinary action shall be taken either directly or indirectly against the person directing the allegation in good faith.

Article 14: Good Moral Conduct

All research performed at AOU (which is described in this document and which includes human samples) is required to obtain good moral conduct before it begins. Ethical approval is obtained from the ethics committee of scientific research.

First: The Scientific Research Ethics Committee
The committee is defined as an independent multidisciplinary body entrusted with the task of reviewing research involving human elements to ensure that human dignity, integrity and rights are protected and guaranteed. There are two levels for the committee:

1) **University-level Committee:**
This committee reviews research projects:
- That include research at the University level and researchers from different branches and/or from outside the University.
- That were forwarded from the branch-level committee for advice and guidance, such as research involving damages or risks.
- That were rejected by the branch-level committee then referred to the University-level committee in the form of an appeal.

2) Branch-level Committee:

This committee reviews all projects that do not include researchers from other branches and/or from outside the University. It may decide to refer the draft research to the University-level committee. In cases of complex ethical issues, a different opinion is required for assistance.

Second: Formulation of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee

The two aforementioned committees should include multiple disciplines. They should also consist of faculty members with expertise in scientific research ethical issues. Regular training workshops should be held especially for the committees' new members. Additionally, when any research project is examined, the committee may request advice from a third party, if deemed appropriate and necessary.

Third: Ethical Review Procedures

These procedures are as follows:

• The principal researcher should fill out the request for good ethical conduct and attach all required information. The request shall contain all the necessary information that will enable the committee of scientific research ethics to conduct the review process. Even in cases where the principal researcher does not see a need for good moral conduct, he must still fill out the application.

• Cases of exemption from ethical approval are limited to anonymous surveys aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, which are used only at the University-level. In case the research received a third-party document of good ethical conduct (such as from a funding agency), the document must be submitted to the ethics committee alongside a copy of the request for said document provided by the third-party in question, in addition to the research project. The scientific research ethics committee then decides whether to accept the document or it has a need for further review. In the case of insufficient information, or if further clarification is required, in the good ethical conduct presented by the principal researcher, he/she should be informed and requested to provide the necessary/missing information.

• The branch-level committee may return the research project to the researcher twice if it does not meet the requirements. If the committee is not satisfied that the minimum requirements are met after a second re-examination, then a decision may be made to reject the research project. The researcher has the right to appeal to the University-level committee.

• After reviewing the appeal, the University-level committee may agree on good conduct or return the project to researchers for further information. After the project is returned, in the event that the University is not satisfied with the research meeting the minimum requirements, the committee can reject the request and ask the researchers to submit a new request after three months to the branch-level committee.

- Research projects that reach the University-level committee are subject to the same procedures used to review research projects at the branch-level. Appeals to decisions of the University-level committee shall be referred to the University President whom may form a special committee to hear the appeal.
- When returning any project for further clarification purposes, the scientific research ethics committee shall clearly identify the ethical requirements that were not available or met in the research project, and what are the necessary steps needed complete the deficiencies.
- Unless the percentage of damages or risk is high at the time of the research's initial review, the branch-level committee may appoint the student's supervisor, a member of the committee, or another faculty member to sign the admission applications for student projects. This applies to research projects that do not constitute a high degree of damages or risk when reviewed, in which more than one member of the committee is involved other than the committee's rapporteur whom is responsible for signing these research projects.

The Scientific Research Ethics Committee's Good Conduct Application Requirements:

1) What are the objectives of the research you will conduct?
2) What is the design of the research?
3) What are the methods of data collection?
4) Who are the participants (the research sample)? how many are there? and what are the selection criteria?
5) What are the procedures for securing prior consent? How will you document the initial and continuing approval?
6) What are the terms of use set by those who give secondary data?
7) Do you have all the skills and resources to conduct the research? Describe them.
8) What are the expected results of the research?
9) What are the benefits to the participants and/or to the third-party?
10) What are the methods/means of communicating information and acquiring feedback from participants?
11) Have you conducted a risk assessment to find out:
    A) If there are potential moral issues and whether a moral review is required?
    B) If there are hazards to the institution, to the research, or the health and safety of the researchers and research participants?
    C) The measures required to ensure confidentiality, privacy and data protection.
12) Will your research comply with all relevant legal and ethical requirements and guidelines? including those issued by other organizations and/or other countries, if necessary?
13) Will your research comply with all legislative requirements as well as proper health and safety practices?
14) Has the research been subjected to any scientific research ethics review by another party?
15) Does the research require any monitoring and auditing requirements?
16) Are you committed to any financial agreements or guidelines related to the project?
17) Have you reached an agreement on intellectual property, publishing and authorship?
18) Have you reached an agreement on joint cooperation (if applicable to the situation)?
19) Have the roles and responsibilities of the researchers, management and supervision been agreed upon?
20) Have all issues related to conflict of interest been identified, disclosed and discussed?
21) Are you familiar with the directives issued by all institutions/organizations related to misconduct in scientific research?

Sources of Regulations

These regulations are derived, with some modifications, from:
• Office of Integrity of Scientific Research (UK—2009): Regulations of Scientific Research Ethics.
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Part Four:

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