LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY

KAMESHWARANAGAR, DARBHANGA

Research Ethics Policy

[Framed under Section 4(1)(b) of the Bihar State Universities Act, 1976.]

1. Preamble

Sound ethical standards are a prerequisite for excellent research. Researchers often face a multidimensional responsibility: to society at large; to those who fund their research; to the institutions where they conduct their research; to the subjects of their research; and for their own. Reconciling those responsibilities entail ethical judgement. The intention informing this policy statement is that the University should provide a procedural framework to researchers in exercising such judgement. The policy has been framed in support of the wider commitments of the University to intellectual freedom and research excellence.

2. Scope of the Policy

In this policy, the term 'researcher' refers to staff and students and to other persons engaged in a research project under L N Mithila University, to whom this policy applies as a condition, whether or not the research is conducted on the University's premises or using the University's facilities. **Ethical approval is required before the commencement of any research involving human participants/subjects or their personal data.**

3. Policy Authority

There shall be a Research Ethics Review Committee consisting of the Head of the concerned discipline as a subject expert, Dean of the concerned Faculty as its members. Deputy Controller (PhD) shall be the convener of the Committee.

4. Ethical Principles

The Policy affirms and advocates the use of the following ethical principles:

a. **Prevention of harm:** Researchers must seek to protect participants/subjects of study from physical and psychological harm during the research process. Researchers should not make frivolous use of participants/subjects of the study. Researchers must also take steps to protect their own physical and psychological well-being during the research process.

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Here, 'harm' refers to a person's actions causing physical harm (including sexual abuse), psychological harm (causing fear, alarm, or distress, or negatively affecting self-esteem) to another person; a person doing something illegal which adversely affects someone else's property, rights, or interests.

b. **Informed consent:** Informed consent is widely accepted as the cornerstone of ethical practice in research that involves human participants or personal data. It entails providing participants with clear information about the purpose of the study, what their participation will involve and how their data will be stored and used in the long term. The informed consent process should stress that participation is voluntary and can be ended at any point during the research. The consent should be written, wherever possible. Research that proposes to use only verbal consent will need to justify why written consent is inappropriate for the study. Where the study involves more than a one-off research interaction, such as the case in the use of longitudinal research methods, it will be necessary to seek approval from participants at more than one juncture of the study.

c. **Rights to withdraw:** In giving consent, participants retain the right to withdraw his/her consent. If applicable, researchers should indicate at what point in the study participants can withdraw consent or request data destruction. Participants should also be informed of what measures are in place for consent to be withdrawn if required.

d. **Confidentiality:** Unless agreed otherwise, the findings from research should be communicated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the participants. Researchers are expected to protect the confidentiality of the participant's identity and data throughout the fullness of the research project.

e. **Anti-discriminatory:** Researchers should act in a manner that complies with the anti-discriminatory Section-5 of the BSU Act,1976.

5. Ethical Requirement

Ethics review is required for any study involving:

• Any experimental/survey work proposal involving human beings, mammalian species, endangered species and cell-line rated works shall require ethical clearance.

• Interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of people, etc.

• User-generated data (e.g. from discussion forums, social media platforms, blogs, comments on posts or articles)

• The collection of any personal data/identifiable information (e.g. names, email addresses, IP addresses, social media profiles or meta-data, visual material, etc.), or use of any secondary data that include any personal data/identifiable information

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- Any other information that could identify (or potentially lead to the identification of) a living individual. For example, where information from micro datasets, if combined, could lead to the identification of individuals, or where an online search for particular wording could lead to the identification of an individual.
- The potential that findings/conclusions/publication may have damaging repercussions for any individuals (reputation, stigma, bullying) or groups with protected characteristics.
- Any other reason why the research might raise ethical issues.

6. Procedure of Review

For ethical approval, researchers are required to read the Research Ethics Policy and to fill up the Ethical Review Checklist.

(a) If based on the Checklist, he/she finds that his/her proposal does not require Ethical Review, he/she will submit his proposal annexing the filled-up checklist duly signed by the candidate.

(b) If based on the Checklist, he/she finds that his/her proposal requires Ethical Review, he/she will then submit electronically the following documents to the official mail of Deputy Controller (PhD):

- The Ethical Review Application Form (Annexure-II)
- The Filled-up and signed Ethical Review Checklist (Annexure-I)
- A copy of the research proposal

The Deputy Controller (PhD) will call upon a meeting of the Research Ethics Committee every quarter of the year. All the applications filed during a quarter shall be placed before the Committee to review the proposals. The decision of the Committee shall be communicated to the Researcher concerned by the office of the Deputy Controller (PhD). In case the Committee recommends any modification in the proposal, the researcher shall submit the revised copy which will be reviewed by the Committee in its next meeting. In case of rejection of the proposal on ethical grounds, the Committee will record the reason for such rejection, and the researcher shall be informed accordingly by the office of the Deputy Controller (PhD).

Education and Training

The University is committed to sustaining and encouraging ethical research conduct among researchers by the provision of training to equip them with the skills to recognise potential risks, and by raising awareness of the University's policy and procedures. For this,

appropriate training shall be provided through workshops and seminars for those undertaking research involving human participants and personal data, and for those responsible for ethical review of such research, so that knowledge and skills are up-to-date.

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Annexure-I: The Ethical Review Checklist

Filter questions	Yes	No
Will your research involves participants from any of the following groups: • Children under 16 years of age (18 in England) • Protected adults • NHS patients or staff • Individuals engaged in criminal activity • Individuals in custody, care homes, or other residential institutions • Individuals impacted by a traumatic event such as war, displacement, acts of terrorism, abuse, discrimination, crime, disasters, life-changing illness or injury, bereavement • Individuals where there is any doubt over their capacity for freely given consent such as through cognitive impairment, language barriers, legal status, terminal illness. • Any other individuals where the researcher or SEC identifies a vulnerability that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.	☐	☐
Will your research involve sensitive topics such as: • Criminal activity • Traumatic experiences like those detailed above • Self-identity i.e. gender, national, ethnic or racial identity • Body image • Mood or mental health conditions	☐	☐
Will your research involve the collection, creation or inference of special category data? Special category data is identifiable data that is also: • personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin • personal data revealing political opinions • personal data revealing religious or philosophical beliefs • personal data revealing trade union membership • data concerning health • data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation • genetic data • biometric data (where this is used for identification)	☐	☐
Will your research involve collection, creation or inference of any other personal, confidential or sensitive data where you feel this might cause distress or that could cause harm should this data be intercepted?	☐	☐
Is there a risk that the research may result in participants becoming distressed? (For remote research, consider that this may be harder to monitor and whether participants will be able to access support)	☐	☐
Will your research involve the use of deception, the withholding of any information about the aims of the research or anything other than total transparency over your role as a researcher?	☐	☐
If a Researcher answers **YES** to **ANY** of the above, his/her application will need the approval of the Ethical Review Committee.		
If a Researcher answers **NO** to **ALL** of the above, his/her application will be treated in consonance with the University Research Ethics Policy and **NO** review shall be required in that case.		

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Annexure-II: The Ethical Review Application Form

1. **Applicant's Detail**

Applicant's Name	
Designation	
Place of Posting	
Name of the Supervisor (if any)	

2. **Project Title**

3. **Project description**: Give a concise narrative description without technical terminology of what you are proposing to do; who your participants are (e.g. age, organisation); how they will be approached/ recruited; where the research will take place (e.g. site, country); what methods you will use, (e.g. survey, interview).). (900 characters for database reasons – using a font size of 11 or larger will help ensure that you do not go over this limit)

4. **Ethical Considerations Involved**: Give an overview of both the ethical issues raised by your research and how you will address them. This could include the risks and benefits, how you will ensure consent (voluntary/informed); confidentiality and how your data will be managed to protect this; potential risks to participants such as distress or reputational harm. NOTE: this should not substantially duplicate the response given in 'Project description' above.
(900 characters for database reasons – using a font size of 11 or larger will help ensure you do not go over this limit)

24.3.22 Signature of the Candidate

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