

Research Ethics Policy of International School of Economics of Maqсут Narikbayev University

This Policy outlines:

- the principles and norms of ethical scientific research for employees and students of International School of Economics;
- the process for ethical review of research projects;
- a list of violations of research ethics;
- types of sanctions for violations and procedures for their enforcement.

1. Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies to research conducted by students and employees of International School of Economics of Maqсут Narikbayev University, including during their studies at any level or under an individual labor contract or part-time arrangement. Researchers within this scope are required to adhere to good research practices and take all reasonable steps to ensure ethical conduct in research involving human participants and the processing of personal data. For the purposes of this Policy, the term "employee" also includes individuals engaged in research or pedagogical activities, or acting as research supervisors, on the basis of civil law contracts with the University. The ISE Committee for Scientific Research is the responsible body for implementing and overseeing compliance with this Policy.

2. Principles of Research Ethics

Scientific research at ISE is governed by the following broad ethical principles. While these reflect key standards widely respected in research, this list is not exhaustive, and researchers are encouraged to adhere to additional ethical norms relevant to their specific disciplines and contexts.

2.1 Principle of Respect for the Dignity of Individuals, Groups, or Communities

Researchers must respect the individual, cultural, and role differences of research participants, including differences in gender, age, nationality, language, and socio-economic status.

2.2 Principle of Utility and Harm Mitigation

Researchers must take necessary measures to minimize potential risks to the physical, emotional, and social well-being of both research participants and themselves. Research should provide demonstrable public and social value that outweighs any potential risks or harm. Researchers should strive to maximize benefits and mitigate risks through appropriate precautions.

2.3 Principle of Integrity and Quality

Research must be planned and conducted with the highest levels of integrity and honesty. Deception, falsification, or manipulation of data at any stage of the research process is strictly

prohibited. Researchers must maintain transparency, adhering to ethical standards when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Poor-quality research that may lead to the dissemination of misleading information or cause harm represents a waste of resources and is not acceptable.

2.4 Principle of Informed Consent

Researchers must obtain informed consent from participants prior to their involvement in the research. Information provided to participants must be sufficient, complete, clear, precise, and ethical, and must be presented in written form. It must be communicated to participants, respondents, organizational administrators, and other third parties involved in the research.

Incomplete disclosure is permissible only in cases where full disclosure would distort the research results, provided that the risk of harm to participants is minimal. Full disclosure should be made as soon as possible after the research is completed.

Informed consent is not required for observation in public places where individuals expect to be observed by strangers. However, researchers must respect the confidentiality and well-being of those being observed.

2.5 Principle of Freedom

Researchers are free to choose areas of research and to speak publicly about the area of their research. No participant may be coerced into expressing a viewpoint that contradicts their personal beliefs. In collaborative research, all co-authors retain the right to express dissenting opinions.

Researchers must respect participants' right to refuse or withdraw from participation in the research at any stage.

2.6 Principle of Confidentiality

Researchers must maintain the confidentiality of personal data, in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning data collection, processing, protection, and storage. Personal data must be anonymized in published research, and researchers must ensure that participants cannot be identified either directly or indirectly. Personal data must be stored separately from anonymized data in secure locations, and must be fully deleted when no longer needed for the research. Participants retain the right to withdraw their consent and request the removal of their data during or after the study, within the time frame communicated to them in writing before the research begins.

2.7 Principle of Objectivity

Researchers are expected to provide an objective analysis of the issues under investigation and to consider opposing viewpoints. The validity of a position should not be questioned solely based on the author's nationality, party affiliation, religion, or any other social identity. Where external funding is involved, the funding organization's policies should not unduly influence the researcher's conclusions.

2.8 Principle of Authorship and Contribution

Research must be conducted by the author(s) listed in the study. Authorship is attributed only to

those who meet the following four criteria as outlined in the guidelines of International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE):

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

All authors must take responsibility for their contribution and agree to the final version of the work for publication.

Individuals who contributed to the project but do not meet these authorship criteria should be appropriately acknowledged. Per ICMJE guidelines, contributors not qualifying for authorship—such as those providing technical assistance or general support—should be listed in the Acknowledgments section of any published work, with a description of their contributions. These individuals should be informed of their inclusion.

2.9 Principle of Openness

Research conducted at ISE is open to discussion, both before and after publication. Researchers must retain research materials and correspondence for a reasonable period after publication. In cases where research is funded externally, details of the funding must be disclosed in the published research.

2.10 Principle of Legality

Researchers must comply with the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan and relevant international standards governing scientific research.

2.11 Principle of Responsible Use of AI

AI is an emerging technology that continues to evolve rapidly, with the academic and policy communities actively working to develop clearer and more comprehensive guidelines for its ethical use. Researchers should view this principle as a foundational starting point and remain mindful of the dynamic nature of AI, adapting their practices as guidelines and policies evolve. Regardless of developments, the use of AI must always conform to general ethical research standards.

Researchers are expected to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools responsibly, ethically, and in ways that uphold academic integrity and transparency. The use of AI should align with principles of accountability, respect for privacy, and compliance with existing ethical standards and regulations. AI is to serve as a supportive tool to enhance, not replace, human judgment and decision-making in research processes.

3. Ethical Review Process

Scope:

If the research involves the collection of data from human subjects, experimentation on human subjects, or the analysis of non-anonymised data that is not publicly available, students and staff of International School of Economics of Maqсут Narikbayev University must obtain prior approval from the ISE Committee for Scientific Research (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") before commencing these stages of the research. The Committee does not grant approval retrospectively, meaning approval must be obtained before the research is conducted.

Exceptions to the Ethical Approval Process:

Ethical approval is not required for the following types of research:

1. Research that uses data already in a fully anonymised form or data that is in the open public domain.
2. Observational research conducted in public places where individuals would reasonably expect to be observed and where no interaction with the individuals being observed is intended.
3. Research conducted solely as part of educational activities aimed at teaching research methods, provided that the research does not involve sensitive data or interaction with vulnerable groups, and the results are not intended for publication or dissemination beyond the educational context.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine whether ethical approval is required or if an exemption applies based on the type of research being conducted. For students, this determination should be made in consultation with their supervisor, who must assess whether the research warrants ethical approval or qualifies for an exemption.

Ethical Approval Process

Application Submission:

The researcher submits a completed application to the **Chair** of the Committee using Annex 1 for primary data collection or Annex 2 for secondary data analysis where the data is not anonymised or is not in the public domain. The researcher must complete all sections of the application, including the necessary appendices, such as the informed consent form.

Application Acceptance:

Within five working days of receiving the application, the **Chair** verifies its completeness and accuracy before forwarding it to the Ethics Committee. If the application is incomplete or inaccurate, the **Chair** will notify the applicant within five working days, providing comments for revision. The applicant must then resubmit the revised application, addressing the feedback.

Application Review:

Once received, the Committee will review the application for ethical compliance within 20

working days (approximately four weeks). To streamline the process, the **Chair** may assign a member of the Committee to make the first recommendation if the project falls within their area of expertise, provided that this Committee member is not the scientific supervisor of the research project seeking ethical approval.

Decision:

After review, the Committee will either:

1. Prohibit the study,
2. Grant partial approval, or
3. Grant full approval.

If the study is fully approved, the **Chair** will notify the applicant of the decision within two working days, allowing the research to commence.

In the case of partial approval, the **Chair** will notify the applicant within two working days, outlining the required modifications to the study plan. The applicant must then revise the study plan and resubmit it to the **Chair**. The **Chair** will review the updated application within five working days to confirm compliance with the Committee’s recommendations, granting full approval on behalf of the Committee. If the revised application does not fully meet the recommendations, the **Chair** may send it back to the applicant for further revision. In cases of significant changes, the **Chair** may refer the revised application back to the Committee for further review.

If the research is prohibited, the **Chair** will inform the applicant within two working days, providing an explanation for the prohibition. The research may not proceed in this case.

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the research is conducted in compliance with the terms approved by the ISE Committee for Scientific Research.

Amendments to the Research Plan:

If the researcher wishes to make changes to the approved study design, they must seek approval from the Committee by completing the application form in Appendix 3 and submitting it to the **Chair**, along with relevant supporting documents. The **Chair** will review the application within 10 working days and, if the changes are minor, may independently decide on approval or partial approval, following the same procedure as outlined above. In cases of significant changes, the **Chair** may refer the amended application to the Committee for review or request the researcher to resubmit it for full Committee consideration.

4. Violations of Research Ethics

Research ethics violations include, but are not limited to, the following:

4.1 Plagiarism – Presenting the intellectual work of others as one’s own. This includes:

- Verbatim quotations without citing the source (author/s);
- Paraphrasing without citing the source;
- Translating foreign-language texts without proper attribution;
- Borrowing quotations from other works without citing the original source of those quotations;
- Using others' ideas, fully or partially, in one's own text without referencing the source (author/s).

4.2 Self-Plagiarism – Reusing one's own previously published work without proper citation. However, the use of parts of research or thesis work in a publication is not considered self-plagiarism if the preliminary results were previously published as a working paper or similar format for the purpose of receiving feedback and fostering academic discussion.

4.3 Fabrication of Data – Creating or manipulating non-existent data or facts to support one's argument, including:

- Citing non-existent sources;
- Attributing information to the wrong author;
- Inventing data, statistics, or research results that do not exist or have not been gathered through legitimate research methods.

4.4 Falsification of Material – Deliberate misrepresentation or manipulation of data, including:

- Concealing or distorting scientific facts, leading to misinterpretation of other researchers' findings.
- Selectively presenting favorable data (cherry-picking) to support specific hypothesis or argument, while ignoring contradictory evidence;

4.5 False Authorship and Co-authorship – Falsely attributing authorship to someone who has not made a substantial intellectual contribution to the research, whether for payment or without compensation. This includes designating an individual as a co-author who has not contributed significantly or proportionally to the research. Conversely, failing to credit someone who has made a substantial contribution is also considered unethical.

4.6 Coercion to Co-authorship – Forcing someone to include a person as a co-author who has not made a significant contribution to the research, using a position of power or other forms of pressure.

4.7 Fabrication of Documents – Submitting false certificates, printouts, reviews, or other documents as evidence of conducting or promoting research.

4.8 Obtaining a Biased Review – Acquiring a signature for a pre-written review or appointing a reviewer who is biased or unqualified to assess the research topic.

4.9 Bribery of Supervisory Personnel – Offering material goods or services to a scientific supervisor, reviewer, publisher, or a member of a pre-defence or defence commission in order to influence the outcome of the research.

4.10 Fabrication of the Defence Procedure – Facilitating the defence of poor-quality or flawed research by preparing pre-scripted questions or allowing a commission member who has not attended the presentation to vote.

4.11 Publication in Predatory Journals – Publishing research results in journals that are considered predatory due to their failure to meet accepted ethical and academic standards. Predatory journals often engage in deceptive practices such as false peer review, charging fees without providing proper editorial oversight, or misrepresenting their impact. The identification of predatory journals by the Committee will be guided by the principles and standards set by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and other recognized frameworks for assessing journal quality. (<https://publicationethics.org/about/our-organisation>).

4.12 Unethical Supervision – A scientific supervisor failing to fulfill their duties in an ethical or professional manner, such as permitting a student to defend research that clearly does not meet minimum academic standards.

4.13 Obstruction of Scientific Activity – Creating unjustified obstacles to the selection of a research topic, supervisor, or the presentation, defence, or publication of research, using a position of authority.

4.14 Conducting Research Without Ethical Approval – Conducting research that has not been approved by the Committee, including data collection from human subjects or the analysis of non-anonymised data. This also applies if approved research is modified without obtaining further approval for the changes.

4.15 Violation of Data Confidentiality – Failing to comply with the legal requirements of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning the collection, processing, protection, and storage of personal data, or failing to anonymise personal data in published research results.

4.16 Failure to Obtain Informed Consent – Not adhering to the principles of sufficiency, completeness, clarity, precision, or ethics when providing information to third parties, respondents, or organisational administrators, as required for obtaining informed consent from research participants.

4.17 Complicity in Ethical Violations – Being involved in any of the above violations and failing to report them to the authorised structures (bodies) of the University.

5. Sanctions

5.1 Violations of research ethics will lead to appropriate penalties, including:

1. Measures established by the labor legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan (e.g., reprimand, strict reprimand, termination of the labor contract).
2. Withdrawal of unpublished research from a publisher or retraction of published research that has been deemed erroneous.
3. Prohibition of the research from undergoing preliminary or public defence.
4. Assignment of a negative evaluation to a student for their research work.
5. Expulsion of the student from the educational program.
6. Exclusion of an employee from receiving bonus salary payments.
7. The employer's refusal to extend the employee's labor contract.
8. Measures provided for by civil law in the Republic of Kazakhstan (e.g., claims for damages, claims for cancellation in accordance with copyright law, or claims for the return of funds such as grants, scholarships, or third-party funds).
9. In cases of significant violations of research ethics, the University will notify relevant educational, scientific, and professional organizations whose interests have been affected. The University may also inform the public to protect the interests of third parties.

5.2 The following criteria will be taken into account when determining penalties:

1. Whether the research was conducted as part of a curriculum, job responsibilities, or on the researcher's own initiative.
2. The extent to which the breach affected the overall integrity of the research.
3. The benefits and advantages the researcher obtained or stood to obtain from the research.
4. The use of technical means and methods to conceal the violation.
5. The harm caused to the rights and interests of other individuals due to the violation.
6. The damage caused to the University's reputation by the violation.
7. Whether the violation contravenes the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
8. The researcher's acknowledgment of the violation and expression of remorse.
9. Any previous misconduct committed by the researcher.

6. Procedure for Handling Research Ethics Violations

6.1 Jurisdiction:

Proceedings related to research ethics violations will be conducted by the Committee. This does not limit the rights of scientific supervisors, pre-defence and defence commissions, dissertation councils, editorial boards, and other bodies or officials from responding to research ethics violations within their competence. Employees, faculty, and students of Maqsut Narikbayev University may be involved in evaluating research methods to ensure compliance with this Policy by researchers from the University or external organizations.

6.2 Allegation of Misconduct:

Any individual may submit a formal complaint to the Committee regarding an alleged violation of research ethics, providing any available evidence. If the complainant requests, their identity will remain confidential from the individual whose research is under scrutiny.

6.3 Assignment of Proceedings:

Upon receipt of a complaint, the **Chair of the Committee** will, within three working days:

- Distribute copies of the complaint and supporting materials to the individual in question, Committee members, and, if applicable, their supervisor.
- Appoint one or more Committee members to investigate the allegation.
- Decide whether to involve external parties in the investigation.
- If the work in question has been submitted for pre-defence, defence, or publication, notify the relevant authorities to halt the process until the investigation is complete.
- Set a date for the Committee meeting to address the case.

6.4 Investigation:

Investigators have the right to request any materials or correspondence related to the research in question from the individual whose work is being investigated. The results of the investigation must be submitted prior to the Committee meeting where the case will be discussed.

Plagiarism checks may employ any technical methods or tools to detect unauthorized borrowings.

University employees and students are required to cooperate with the investigation and provide necessary information.

If the allegation concerns a Committee member, that member will be suspended from any involvement in the investigation.

6.5 Proceedings:

The inquiry will take place during a regular or extraordinary Committee meeting, with the individual whose research is under investigation being invited. Participation from others is mandatory if their testimony was not collected during the investigation.

The individual accused of violating this Code will be informed of the claims against them. Investigators will present the facts they have uncovered. The individual under investigation will have the opportunity to present evidence in support of their position.

6.6 Making a Decision:

Based on the investigation, the Committee will determine whether a violation of research ethics has occurred. If a violation is found, the Committee will either impose a sanction within its authority or recommend a sanction to the University's management.

Non-Committee members are not allowed to attend discussions of the decision.

Decisions are made by a simple majority vote. No Committee member may abstain from the discussion or voting. If there is a conflict of interest, the member must inform the Committee and will be excused from the discussion and vote.

The Committee will promptly inform all relevant parties of the decision. The school administration is responsible for implementing the Committee's decisions and maintaining records of the case.

Committee members are required to maintain confidentiality regarding specific cases until a final decision is reached, except for those directly involved in the investigation.