



# ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

## UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICE

### **Ethics Review Guidelines And Procedures For Undergraduate Student-Initiated Research (Undergraduate Theses)**

#### **Scope of the Guidelines**

The following guidelines pertain to ethics review of undergraduate student – initiated research, i.e. research that is independently conceptualized and conducted with the supervision of a faculty adviser, such as theses or capstone projects.<sup>1</sup> The assumption is that the undergraduate research is commenced and completed within one school year or one semester.

Graduate students may also apply the process in these guidelines if the students initiate and conduct research for a one-semester class (otherwise, graduate theses and dissertations undergo the University-level procedures).

Undergraduate and graduate research aims to systematically answer research questions and develop or contribute to a domain of disciplinary knowledge (including theories, principles, relationships) and is disseminated in publications and presentations. It falls within the scope of scholarly work subject to ethics review.

#### **Rationale for the Guidelines**

All research activities involving human participants that are conducted in the Ateneo de Manila University must comply with institutional, national, and international ethics standards.

Departments, faculty, and students are jointly responsible for safeguarding the rights and safety of research participants, and promoting their welfare whenever possible, alongside efforts to develop disciplinary knowledge and promote research productivity.

The procedures indicated in this document aim to make the review process for undergraduate students efficient while maintaining standards for rigorous ethics review. The ethics review process should also be considered from an educational or learning standpoint. The primary aim is for students to learn and practice ethical ways of undertaking research, rather than to control or limit student research.

#### **Procedures**

1. Departments that require undergraduate student theses / capstone projects that involve human participants must have a Department Research Ethics Committee. Refer to the guidelines on the constitution of the DREC.
2. Students prepare their ethics clearance application form (AdMUREC Form 12) together with their faculty adviser; the adviser co-signs the application form. The adviser and student develop

---

<sup>1</sup> Graduate student theses / dissertations are reviewed by the LS AdMUREC.

the proposal according to the recommended features of undergraduate research (see following list).

- The probability and magnitude of any physical, psychological, social, or legal risks in conducting (for the students) and participating in the study approximate what people typically experience in daily life (i.e. minimal risk).
- Respondents are able to give individual informed and voluntary consent to participate in the activity (if minor, with consent of guardian).
- Adequate steps are in place to maintain respondents' well-being during the interactions, such as safeguarding against excessively or potentially distressing questions/stimuli.
- Personal identifiable information <sup>2</sup> is not collected or recorded from respondents (i.e. anonymous). If not anonymous, adequate steps are taken to ensure confidentiality in reporting (e.g. use of pseudonyms or codes) and data is discarded as soon as the requirement is completed.
- Participants' responses (to surveys, interviews, etc) do not pose serious legal or social consequences to them if their identities are inadvertently disclosed.
- Does not involve the students in providing health-related therapeutic interventions they do not have the expertise to conduct.
- If participants include vulnerable persons (i.e. have limited capacity to decide what is in their interest and are at particular risk for exploitation or marginalization, e.g. minors, prisoners, indigenous persons, indigent communities), the following special precautions and considerations should be in place:
  - justification for conducting the activity with vulnerable persons (i.e. for what purpose? for whose benefit?)
  - participants' voluntary consent and agency throughout activity
  - participants' well-being throughout activity
  - researchers' reflexivity and appropriate behaviors in the site/context
  - adviser or instructor has the competence to supervise the students in their interactions with the vulnerable group

3. The student or adviser submits AdMUREC Form 12 to the 1-2 DREC member/s assigned to review the ethics component of the proposal. Procedures for assigning DREC reviewers to student proposals are set by the department. Conflicts of interest should be managed (i.e. the reviewer is not involved in the project nor have other conflicts of interest with respect to the student and/or adviser).

---

<sup>2</sup> Identifiers include: name, residence, email address, telephone/cellphone number, birthdate, social security numbers, gov-issued ID numbers, financial accounts/records, biometric data, IP / device serial numbers, full face photo and/or video

4. The DREC reviewer uses the official AdMUREC Form 13 - Student Protocol Assessment Form (SPAF) to review the application. The DREC reviewer can (but not necessarily) be part of the student's thesis proposal panel and can provide direct feedback during the defense.
5. The DREC reviewer signs the SPAF indicating his or her comments and the decision on the protocol (Approve; Revise) and provides a copy to the student and adviser.
6. If the decision is for the protocol to undergo modifications, the students revise their protocols as recommended together with their faculty adviser. The adviser co-signs the SPAF indicating the revisions made to the protocol. The DREC reviewer checks the responses to his or her recommendations, and indicates the decision on the SPAF.
7. The student may proceed with data collection when the protocol is granted ethics approval.
8. The faculty advisers submit all documentation of the undergraduate ethics clearance process (i.e. AdMUREC Form 12 and AdMUREC Form 13 with signed notification of approval) to the DREC Chair / Department Research Coordinator / other designated individual, who then collates, summarizes, and submits the documentation to UREO at the end of every semester.
9. The DREC documentation, review process, and outcomes are subject to an audit or evaluation by the UREC to ensure maintenance of standards. Meetings to discuss issues and other recommendations will be organized by UREO with the DREC and the Department Chair, if necessary.
10. Students whose research had been approved at the department level but who require an official letter of ethics approval for conference presentation or research publication may obtain this from the UREO.