



University of Balamand

# **Ethics in Research Policy**

Office of the Provost

**Title:** Ethics in Research policy

**Document Type:** Public

**Policy Owner:** Office of the President, Office of the Provost

**Applies to:** Faculty researchers, postdoctoral fellows, research assistants, and graduate and undergraduate students

**Effective date:** Immediately

**For More Information, Contact:** The Office of the Provost

**Contact Information:** [president@balamand.edu.lb](mailto:president@balamand.edu.lb); [Provost@balamand.edu.lb](mailto:Provost@balamand.edu.lb)

06-930-250; Extension: 1633 or 1511

**Official Website:** <https://www.balamand.edu.lb/AboutUOB/Pages/University-Policies.aspx>

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## **Background**

In line with its ethical organizational culture and its strategic goals to promote research as a pillar of higher education, the University of Balamand is committed to the generation and transfer of new knowledge through ethical research practices. This commitment reflects the university's belief that the pursuit of new knowledge is not only a cornerstone of academic excellence but also a powerful catalyst for positive societal change. Therefore, fostering a research environment that upholds the highest standards of ethics and integrity is a fundamental pillar of the University of Balamand identity.

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this policy is to uphold the highest ethical standards in all institutional research endeavors, among which are all aspects and elements of conceiving and executing any research study and/or an invention, including original creations/performances in the fine and performing arts. This policy is not inclusive of every ethical consideration, but rather provides a foundational, organizational framework for the university's ethical research culture.

## Definitions

**Research misconduct:** refers to the fabrication, falsification and plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

**Plagiarism:** defined as passing off someone else's work or ideas as your own without attribution to the source. Plagiarism is a form of fraud.

**Conflict of interest:** refers to the instance when an investigator's relationship to an organization affects his/her objectivity in the process of conducting scholarly or scientific research.

**Copyright:** protection of ownership for an original work of authorship that grants exclusive rights to copy, distribute, adapt, display, and perform a creative work, for a limited time pertaining to creative works of a scholarly, literary, artistic, educational, or musical form.

**Infringement:** refers to using the work of others outside of copyright law; taking the rights to work held by a copyright owner without permission.

**Intellectual property:** defined as creations of the mind, which can be the result of academic scholarship such as the development of textbooks, literary works, artistic creations, artifacts, as well as any creation covered by a patent or copyright and including trademarks or trade secrets.

**Patent:** confers the right of protection for new inventions, processes, or scientific creations preventing others from making, using or selling without written permission.

**Fair use:** refers to the limited use of copyrighted material, only after having obtained permission.

**Data Integrity:** refers to the overall accuracy, completeness, and consistency of data as well as to the prohibiting of the manipulation of data to suit or support a researcher's claims.

**Data Management:** refers to the process of collecting, organizing, using, and storing data securely.

**Verifiable data:** defined as reporting of data in a manner that ensures verifiability or the ability of proving data as true or correct.

**Institutional Review Board (IRB):** refers to an institutional administrative entity that aims to protect the rights, welfare and privacy of human research subjects participating in research

activities conducted by researchers affiliated with the institution. The IRB reviews all institutional proposed research protocols and has the authority to approve, request revisions, monitor or reject any proposed research protocol.

## **Policy Statement**

The University of Balamand endorses an Ethics in Research policy that encompasses all aspects of the research process, from the initial design of the research protocol to the creation of data gathering and planning of experiments, management of the research subjects, data generation and analysis, and the interpretation and publication of the findings. The policy also foresees the adoption and practice of international standards in animal care and use, as well as the ethical use of emerging technologies in research such as artificial intelligence and gene editing.

### **A. Ethical Guiding Principles**

This policy specifies a set of guiding principles to ensure that all research activities conducted at the University of Balamand comply with the following ethical practices:

1. All research protocols involving human subjects must undergo IRB review. This applies to research at the student and professional researcher levels. The investigators must transparently disclose the source to fund the execution of the research protocol, along with its budget. The IRB has full authority to grant or reject a research proposal if the funding body is found not to meet the university's ethical standards and core values of operation as a higher education institution.
2. No research activity involving human subjects can begin until the acquirement of IRB formal approval of the research protocol.
3. All research protocols involving animals must comply with the standards of animal welfare or the ethical guidelines set by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
4. All research protocols must abide at all times by the safety codes and practices in university labs, specifically in research activities involving biohazardous agents.
5. Environmental research activities that interact with natural ecosystems must protect and preserve environmental biodiversity.

6. All investigators must disclose conflicts of interest at any level of the research process from the conception of the research protocol to its publication. Potential of conflicts of interest includes authorship, publication sources, and business partiality in material acquisition.
7. Researchers must manage internal and external research funds and institutional facilities use transparently and equitably.
8. All investigators must disclose research results involving human subjects in case of findings that are harmful. The primary investigator must disclose the harm to the IRB by a formal letter, and the IRB shall take a decision about resuming or halting the research protocol. Then, the IRB decision will be conveyed to the primary investigator.
9. Investigators must maintain detailed records of every experimental protocol in a logbook, including experiment dates, description of the used materials and methods, number of iterations, and the results obtained.
10. Authorship must be fair and accurate to ensure that all contributors to the research study are included and that all authors are in fact contributors. The order of authorship convention must be respected, particularly in the domain of natural sciences.
11. Data not generated by the primary researcher or co-investigators is prohibited from being included in publications, and derived data in natural sciences must be reproduced through experimentation.
12. All researchers must ensure that their experimental data is verifiable.

## **B. Principles of Reporting**

1. This policy encourages researchers to engage in public outreach and communicate their findings to the broader community to promote knowledge dissemination.
2. The guiding principles, referred to above, place a paramount obligation on researchers to uphold the principles of transparency, accuracy, and impartiality when reporting both data and their interpretations of the data.
3. The guiding principles assume that all researchers will use their own original thinking and words.
4. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be disclosed. In this case, the responsible use of AI is mandatory.

### **C. Intellectual property ownership**

The University of Balamand strives to encourage research, discoveries, inventions and intellectual work of all kinds. The intellectual property that results from the ingenuity and resourcefulness of a UOB employee will belong to UOB in the case of any novel results of research, such as products, processes, machines, software, biological technology, etc.

Any use of ideas, data, words or creations of any kind that are not generated by the researcher(s), including AI-generated, must receive attribution. Failure to attribute “borrowed” ideas will be considered as plagiarism.

### **D. Data management**

Data generated from all research conducted under the sponsorship of UOB will be stored for the duration of the project and up to a minimum of 5 years, unless dictated otherwise, by the nature of the project. Data from a research study that leads to a patent must be archived for 7 years, and research data of a community or a heritage should be permanently archived.

### **Enforcement**

The University of Balamand has a zero tolerance policy towards any researcher found in violation of fundamental ethical standards in research, including those outlined in this policy document; and importantly a zero tolerance towards the use of “fake” data and/or data not genuinely generated through the researcher’s own diligent efforts. This kind of unethical behavior is

regarded with the utmost seriousness and is strictly and unequivocally prohibited within the University of Balamand research community.

### **Procedures/Forms**

The Office of the Provost is entrusted with the creation of all policies that govern the pursuit of research and the corresponding ethical behaviors required. Consequently, any violation observed or known should be reported to the Office of the Provost via the “Ethics in Research complaint form”. Once the form is received, the Provost will determine the best university entity to address the issue.

1. If an ethics in research violation is discovered at the Faculty level, the dean should disclose the violation to the provost, especially if the research was funded by a UOB research grant. The dean, in consultation with the provost, may be entrusted with handling the issue.
2. In the case of an ethical violation at the faculty researcher level, there is no statute of limitations and the report of the violation will be stored permanently in the Office of the Provost.
3. In the case of a student researcher, the violation will be filed for 10 years. After this period, and provided there are no additional violations, the student’s record will be wiped clean.