UNIVERSITY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, ACCRA
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

The University of Professional Studies Accra (UPSA) focuses on scholarship with professionalism, and therefore, recognizes the importance of research in its mandate to contribute to knowledge. This document sets out the policy and procedures for research ethics review, to guide research activities within the UPSA community. It can, therefore, be used to assure granting agencies and academic bodies of the quality and integrity of research conducted at UPSA. Hence, all applicable research (whether funded or unfunded) at UPSA involving human and animal subjects should follow the highest ethical standards, and therefore, should be submitted for independent ethical review.

2. AIMS

The primary goal of this policy is to advance institutional development by encouraging the integration of ethical review of research into the mission and activities of the university. The purpose of the review is to require researchers to reflect and consider ethical implications of their study or investigation and the potential risk to human and animal subjects and the researchers themselves. The policy, therefore, serves as an institutional development tool that outlines the scope, guiding principles and organizational framework to protect the rights and welfare of human and animal subjects for all research activities at UPSA. The policy also aims at outlining our standards of ethics, integrity and excellence in all research conducted at the university. This policy shall help to independently manage and monitor formal research study approval process to minimize any harmful impacts on human and animal subjects.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all research activities carried out by members or involving members of the UPSA community. The term UPSA community refers to all faculty, staff, students, and other affiliated institutions and personnel within the University. Students of UPSA are governed by the standards established in this policy. All UPSA staff, including administrators, faculty, and professionals, who are involved in research are subject to this policy. The policy applies to all academic subjects and disciplines. Faculty who are employed at UPSA but are involved in a funded research project granted to another institution are subject to the policies of that institution. Faculty who are conducting research for the completion of a graduate degree from another institution are subject to the policies of that institution unless they propose to use members of the UPSA community as their research subjects. The policy does not apply to research conducted as part of class instruction for the purposes of satisfying class assignment requirements unless the research entails more than minimal risk to human and non- human subjects.

4. RESEARCH REQUIRING OR NOT REQUIRING ETHICAL APPROVAL

4.1. All research including, but not limited to:

a) Postgraduate research for the award of MPhil or PhD degrees involving human or non-human subjects;
b) Research undertaken by faculty, staff and other affiliated employees involving human and non-human subjects;
c) Research that is funded in whole or in part by UPSA or an external organization(s);
d) Research undertaken by a member of the UPSA community, in the name of UPSA;
e) Institutional research conducted on UPSA or commissioned by UPSA.
f) Undergraduate projects or non-research (i.e., taught) postgraduate thesis, determined by the designated instructor and/or supervisor to require a research ethics review.

4.2. In all types of research, the researcher(s) must consider the ethical implications of their proposed research to make a decision if the proposed research raises ethical risk or not, and for that matter, if ethical approval will be needed or not.

4.3. Where in doubt as to whether a piece of research will require ethical approval or not, it is recommended that researchers seek further advise from the Research Ethics Coordinator.

4.4. Where a proposed research raises no ethical risk and hence no ethical approval is required, the researchers are required to complete a Research Ethics Disclaimer form (available at www.upsa.edu.gh/).

4.5. A Research Ethics Disclaimer form may be completed when the piece of research will NOT:
a) Involve human or animal participants; and/or
b) Present a risk to non-participants (human or animal); and/or
c) Raise ethical issues due to the potential social or environmental implication of the study; and/or
d) Re-use previously collected personal data which is sensitive in nature, or enables the identification or individuals (human or animal)

4.6. Apart from the conditions described in 4.5, research ethics approval will not normally be required when:
a) The research will only use information that is in the public domain or freely available. This may include published annual reports, newspaper articles etc.;
b) The research will use anonymized records and data sets that already exist publicly (e.g., Data published by the Ghana Statistical Service).

5. POLICY OVERSIGHT

5.1. The process shall be administered by at least a 5-member administrative committee to be called the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) and assisted by a Research Ethics Coordinator.

5.2. IREC composition

a) There shall be at least a 5-member IREC as follows:

a. Director of Research and Consultancy Centre - Chair
b. One (1) representative from the Faculty/School/Centre/Institute related to the application, nominated by the respective Dean/Director
c. One (1) representative from the local community (i.e., lay member)
d. One (1) representative from an external research institution (e.g., Council for Scientific and Industrial Research)
e. Ethics Review Coordinator

5.3. Appointment/Confirmation of IREC Members

The Vice Chancellor shall be responsible for appointing the committee members in line with Section 5.2.

5.4. Tenure of IREC Members

- Members shall be appointed to serve on IREC for three years subject to renewal.
- Members who are confirmed as IREC members by virtue of recognized institutional offices they hold, cease to be members of the committee when they cease to occupy their respective institutional offices.

5.5. IREC Specific Responsibilities

The IREC shall have the following responsibilities:

- Meet at least quarterly to review and monitor research involving human subject carried out by faculty, students, and staff within the University community;
- Develop and publish its formal review process and procedures;
- Notify researchers in writing regarding actions taken in relation to their submitted proposals;
- Monitor on-going or continuing research studies for compliance with approved studies – the IREC may monitor research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk to study subjects;
- Appoint other experts and stakeholders to advise on the review of specific research study applications as necessary;
- Provide training and guidance to researchers and research supervisors;
- Keep records of all proposals received for review, minutes of meetings, and records of decisions made on respective proposals, as well as renewal request;
- Submit annual report to management of the University.

5.5 IREC meetings

- The Chair shall preside over all meetings
- The IREC shall meet at least once every quarter
- Minutes shall be taken at each meeting and a copy is sent to the Research and Consultancy Centre

- Members with some form of conflict of interest with any proposal for any reason, shall state the extent of his/her interest and recuse himself/herself from the meeting when the said proposal is being considered

6. GENERAL GUIDELINES

It is the University's policy to protect the right of human subjects in research, and therefore, requires all research to be conducted in an ethical manner. Hence, any research conducted by faculty, staff, students, or affiliates, is subject to the review and approval by the IREC. The IREC shall ensure that all of the following requirements are duly satisfied in the course of the review process:

- The research design is sound and the procedures or techniques are consistent with known practices that are likely to minimise risks to human subjects;

- Risks to human subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits (if any) to subjects, and the importance of knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result;

- Selection of the subjects or participants is fair and just. The IREC shall assess this by taking into account the purposes of the research and the setting in which the research will be conducted.

- An informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject, signed and documented.

- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to attempt to protect the safety of the subjects. If any serious breach in the procedure or harmful event occurs with a subject it should be reported to the IREC as soon as possible.

- The proposal makes provisions to uphold the privacy concerns of the subjects and maintain confidentiality of data. Where some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable, such as persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or persons who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, appropriate additional measures must be included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects.

7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

IREC shall meet at least once every quarter. The meeting dates and application deadlines, shall be published at least three (3) months in advance on its website and widely distributed through the Public Relations Directorate of the university.

7.1. All applicants are required to download, complete and submit a hardcopy of the IREC Review Form which is available at www.upsa.edu.gh/

7.2. In addition to the IREC Review Form, the application must be submitted with the following documents for consideration:

- A hard copy of the proposal (maximum of 10 pages).
- CVs of all Investigators with a cover letter signed by the Principal Investigator
- A cover letter signed by the Supervisor or Head of Department (Applies to Student Investigators only)
- An Informed Consent Form for Potential Research Participants (Subjects) which is available at www.upsa.edu.gh
- Research Instrument (Questionnaire/Interview guide)

7.3. Hard copies of applications should be submitted to the Research and Consultancy Centre, Rev. J. J. Martey Block, Last floor, Room TFN01 at least ten working days prior to the meeting. The soft copies should be sent by email to rcc@upsamail.edu.gh;

8. POST IREC MEETING REVISIONS

All applicants are required to re-submit completed revisions recommended by IREC, to the Research and Consultancy Centre before starting the proposed research study

9. NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICS REVIEW PROCEDURES

The University expects that research carried out in its name complies with the requirements of this policy. Where a breach of this policy is suspected, the University may take relevant action in accordance with its disciplinary procedures.

10. APPEALS

10.1. A researcher may appeal against an ethics review decision in any of the following circumstances:

a) Procedural irregularities resulting in reasonable doubt about the review decision.
b) Existence of material information of which the reviewers were unaware.
c) Existence of demonstrable evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate review.

10.2. An appeal should be submitted in writing and provide the following information:

a) The title of the research proposal.
b) The reason(s) for the appeal.
c) Any documentary evidence to support the appeal.

11. UPSA RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY AND GUIDELINES

For the detailed Research Policy please click below
https://upsa.edu.gh/docx/research-policy.pdf

For the details on Plagiarism Policy please click below
https://upsa.edu.gh/docx/policies/rcc/plagiarism-policy.pdf

12. REVIEW

This policy shall be subject to review every three years on the approval.

13. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Review Date
1st	Vice Chancellor			Three years from approval date