

Appendix 1

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**Regulation of the Research Ethics Commission of the
International Black Sea University LLC**

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Tbilisi
2025

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Article 1. Definition of Terms

1) The terms used in this Regulation have the following meanings:

a) **University** – The "International Black Sea University" LLC.

b) **School**: the university's primary educational structural unit;

c) **Research** – Conducting scientific or creative activities, including Basic (fundamental) research: publishing scientific articles in peer-reviewed publications, publishing monographs, authorship or co-authorship of a chapter in a book, publishing an article in a proceedings books of a scientific conferences or meetings, presenting a paper at a scientific symposium, conference, or research seminar, or editing individual chapters and subsections of a scientific publication. Applied research: writing a scientific article and publishing it in a journal, newspaper, or electronic publication; authorship/co-authorship or writing a chapter in a scientific book; giving important presentations at conferences and professional meetings of the discipline/field; editorship of a professional book, journal, newspaper, or electronic publication. The research regarding development of learning, teaching, and pedagogical activities: case study preparation; making a study guide; writing, translating, editing textbooks; creating a chapter in a textbook; conducting research to produce educational resources, manuals, and/or software; producing training resources;

d) **Researcher** - a member of the University's academic community and/or affiliate staff who conducts research and publishes findings on the University's behalf. The term "researcher" refers to both an individual researcher and a team of researchers for the purposes of this Regulation;

e) **Research Ethics Commission** - a structural unit established in accordance with and for the purposes of this Regulation, which is subordinate to the relevant school and which may be referred to as the Commission in this Regulation.

f) **Academic staff** - a professor, associate professor, assistant professor and assistant selected through a contest procedure held in accordance with the Georgian legislation on higher education, who is affiliate/not affiliate with the university, is employed full/part-time on the basis of an employment contract and participates/leads the research, academic, consulting/administrative process;

g) **Affiliated staff members**—professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and assistants chosen through a contest process held in accordance with the Georgian legislation on higher education — is employed full/part-time on the basis of an employment contract and participates/leads the research, academic, consulting/administrative process;

h) **Research ethics** - compliance of the research conducted by the researcher with the provisions defined by this Regulation, Georgian legislation and international standards.

2) All other terms used in the Regulation shall have the meaning defined by other Regulations of the University and the legislation of Georgia.

Article 2. General Provisions

- 1) The Regulation regulates the establishment, formation, activities of the Research Ethics Commission in the relevant school of the University, the ways of achieving commission goals and fulfilling its tasks. It establishes the structure and functions and responsibilities of the Commission;
- 2) The aim of the Regulation is to regulate the compliance of research conducted/published on behalf of the university by academic and/or affiliated personnel with the principles and norms of ethical research;
- 3) The primary function of the Research Ethics Commission is to evaluate whether research in the university is ethically compliant with Georgian Law and international standards for research ethics, as well as whether it is appropriate to conduct the study on the university's behalf;
- 4) The aim of the Research Ethics Commission is to be a guarantor that:
 - a) the research conducted by the researcher will be carried out with the responsibility and high standards, in accordance with the rules established by the Georgian legislation and international norms in the field of research ethics;
 - b) The planned research complies with generally accepted ethical standards;
 - c) The safety, personal autonomy, dignity and other rights of the individuals participating in the research are protected and ensured;
- 5) The requirements of this Regulation apply to affiliated and academic personnel of the University who are authorized to conduct research activities within the scope of their authority and to publicize or publish research results on behalf of the University. This Regulation does not apply to research conducted by the School of Medicine, since School is guided by the specific ethical norms applicable in the field;
- 6) The Ethics Commission conducts its activities in accordance with the legislation of Georgia, legal acts of the University and this Regulation;
- 7) The activities of the Research Ethics Commission are based on the principles of legality, equality and integrity, collegiality and confidentiality;
- 8) The Research Ethics Commission ensures the achievement of the goal outlined in this Regulation through an assessment of the ethics of the research, within the framework of which the Commission reviews the application submitted by the researcher, assesses its ethical aspects, prepares an assessment, and determines the compliance of the research with ethical norms;
- 9) Research is ethical and, accordingly, the Ethics Committee determines compliance with ethical norms/standards if the research meets all of the following criteria:

- a) The research is consistent with the fields of study at the university;
- b) The research does not contradict generally recognized moral goals and principles;
- c) The research does not violate human rights and freedoms;
- d) No part of the research contains information that is defamatory of the dignity or reputation of others;
- e) The research does not use methods that may violate the rights of third parties and/or mislead them;
- f) The research does not contradict the legislation and legal principles of Georgia that are in force;
- g) The research is the direct result of the researcher's research activities;
- h) The research complies with generally recognized ethical norms and principles for conducting research in a specific field.

Article 2¹. Incorporation of international practices, norms and principles in the field of research ethics

- 1) The Regulation Shares The fundamental principles of research integrity as defined in The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity¹, the research ethics² and the code of conduct³ established by The British Educational Research Association (BERA), as well as the internet research ethics⁴ established by the Association of Internet Researchers.
- 2) This Regulation is not limited to the documents specified in the first paragraph of this article and, if necessary, it also shares the principles and provisions specified in other sources (including international treaties, conventions, etc.) that may be directly or indirectly related to aspects of research ethics.
- 3) If this Regulation does not specify any aspects related to the ethics of research, the Research Ethics Commission is authorized to be guided by the sources specified in the first and second paragraphs of this article.

Article 3. Composition of the Research Ethics Commission

- 1) The composition of the commission is approved upon the recommendation of the school dean and based on the order of the university rector.
- 2) The number of members of the commission must be odd and consist of at least 5 members;
- 3) The Commission shall be composed of:

¹ ALLEA (2023) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity – Revised Edition 2023. Berlin. DOI 10.26356/ECOC

² British Educational Research Association [BERA]. (2024). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (5th ed.). www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2024

³ British Educational Research Association [BERA]. (2023). *BERA handbook: Member code of conduct*. www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Code-of-Conduct-2023.pdf

⁴ Association of Internet Researchers. (2019). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines (3.0.)* <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>

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- a) the Dean of the School (Chairperson of the Commission);
 - b) School affiliate staff;
 - c) Head of the relevant program;
 - d) Specialist(s) in the field;
 - e) Invited expert (as needed).
- 4) The Commission will hold a meeting no later than five working days after its composition has been approved, during which it will choose a Deputy Chairman and a Secretary from among its members;
- 5) The Commission is independent in its activities; if the Commission considers it necessary, it invites a specialist or specialists in the pertinent field or area of the submitted research for consideration (henceforth referred to as the "invited expert"), which participates in the activities of the Commission with the right to a deliberative vote.
- 6) The Chairperson of the Commission, within the scope of his/her authority:
- a) Leads the meetings of the Ethics Commission;
 - b) Submits the research to be considered to the Ethics Commission;
 - c) Develops the Ethics Commission's activity plan;
 - d) Ensures the execution of other functions.
- 7) The Secretary of the Commission, within the scope of his/her authority:
- a) Provides procedural and technical support to the Ethics Commission's work in accordance with the Chairman's directives, including: creating documents for the Commission, setting up meetings, sending the agenda to Ethics Commission members, creating meeting protocols (decisions), and carrying out other procedures;
 - b) is required to give at least five working days' notice to the commission members regarding the meeting's time, location, composition (if an expert is invited), and agenda;
- 8) The Commission's duration of authority is one year from the date of its' approval by the Rector's order.
- 9) Extraordinary (before the expiration of 1 year) renewal of the composition of the Ethics Commission shall be carried out upon termination of the authority of a member of the Commission, namely:
- a) based on a personal statement of a member of the Commission;
 - b) In accordance with the Commission's/ Commission member's decision (recusal/conflict of interest, avoidance of bias);
 - c) A Commission member's death;
 - d) A court's recognition of a Commission member as a support recipient who is incapacitated, missing, or deceased;
 - e) A Commission member's termination from an administrative role that involves Commission membership.

Article 4: Procedure Rules of the Research Ethics Commission

- 1) The Research Ethics Commission shall hold meetings as often as necessary to perform its functions.

- 2) Procedure in the Research Ethics Commission shall commence upon the application of the researcher and shall proceed in accordance with the rules established by this Regulation.
- 3) The meeting of the Research Ethics Commission is held on the basis of a pre-established agenda. The meeting is led by the Chairperson of the Commission and in case of Chairpersons absence - by the Deputy Chairperson.
- 4) The members of the Research Ethics Commission shall be sent the agenda of the meeting and the necessary documentation (if any) 3 working days prior to the date of the meeting.
- 5) The Chairperson of the Research Ethics Commission may invite persons specified in this Regulation who are not members of the Ethics Commission to participate in the work of the Commission meeting (as necessary). Information about the invited persons shall be provided to the members of the Commission together with the agenda
- 6) The Research Ethics Commission shall have the power to make decisions if the Chairperson (or Deputy Chairperson), a specialist in the relevant field and the Secretary of the meeting are present at the meeting.
- 7) The Research Ethics Commission shall make decisions by open voting. The decision shall be considered adopted, if the proposal is supported by the majority of members present at the meeting. In the event of an equal distribution of votes, the vote of the Chairperson of the Commission shall be decisive.
- 8) The activities of the Research Ethics Commission shall be reflected in the protocols (decisions) of the meetings, which shall be indicated:
 - a) Date of the meeting;
 - b) Persons present at the meeting;
 - c) Agenda of the meeting;
 - d) The Commission's conclusion on the issue included in the agenda;
 - e) List of accompanying documents (if any).
- 9) The protocols (decisions) of the meeting of the Research Ethics Commission shall be signed by all members present at the meeting.
- 10) The procedures of the Research Ethics Commission that are not specified in this Regulation may be established directly by the Commission in the form of a written decision and notified to interested parties.
- 11) Information/documentation submitted for the purpose of determining compliance with the ethical principles of research, including the protocols (decisions) of the Commission meetings, may contain personal data, information related to intellectual property, the secure and confidential placement of which must be ensured in accordance with the legislation of Georgia.
- 12) The Research Ethics Commission is authorized to issue recommendations, as necessary, on the matters regulated by the Regulation.
- 13) The Research Ethics Commission ensures that reviewed applications (researches) are registered, the Commission is responsible for creating and submitting an annual report on the work performed to the Rector. It will provide other structural units with a copy of the report if needed.
- 14) To achieve the goals established by the Regulation, the Research Ethics Commission executes other powers provided for by this Regulation and the legislation of Georgia.

Article 5. Submission of an application to the Research Ethics Commission

- 1) Procedure in the Research Ethics Commission shall commence upon the written application of the researcher. The application must include the essential components of the research, namely, the field of research, the subject of the research, relevance, research methods, research objectives, and results. Depending on the specifics of the research subject, the researcher has the right to submit other documents related to the research along with the application.
- 2) The Secretary of the Research Ethics Commission conducts an initial formal review of the application and supporting documentation (if any) submitted by the researcher.
- 3) If the researcher fails to provide the information requested in the application or incompletely provides the information, the Secretary of the Commission shall prepare a written response regarding the deficiency within 3 working days from the date the application is submitted.
- 4) In case of a deficiency, the researcher is given 5 working days to submit a complete application.
- 5) The secretary of the Commission registers the researcher's application in the electronic database, assigning a registration number to the application, indicating the name of the school and the research, the personal data of the research supervisor/principal researcher (name, surname, academic position, degree), the date of submission of the application, and the name of the research initiative group (if any).
- 6) The Secretary of the Commission, in agreement with the Chairperson, sends the completed application to the members of the Ethics Commission by e-mail.
- 7) The Commission may request any other additional information necessary for the ethical assessment of the research.
- 8) The application form for requesting a determination of compliance with research ethical standards is presented as Appendix No. 1 to this Regulation and constitutes an integral part of it.

Article 6. Decision of the Research Ethics Commission

- 1) No member of the Commission has the right to evaluate the research if there is a possible conflict of interest. In such a case, the relevant member of the Ethics Commission is obliged to refuse to evaluate the research - to declare self-recusal.
- 2) If a member of the Commission, despite the existence of grounds for recusal, does not declare self-recusal, the Commission has the right to request the recusal of that person at any stage of the Commission's activities by a reasoned written application. The matter of the recusal of a person included in the Commission is decided by the Commission without that person, with the participation of all other members.
- 3) In the event of a possible conflict of interest, the researcher is entitled to declare recusal against a specific member of the Commission.
- 4) When making a decision, the Commission must be guided by the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and equality of parties.

- 5) The decision of the Commission must be substantiated and based on the application and documents submitted by the researcher (if any), the factual circumstances surrounding the case and relevant evidence.
- 6) A member of the Commission who disagrees with the decision of the Commission has the right to express a different opinion, which must be reflected in the protocols (decisions) of the Commission meeting.
- 7) The Commission shall issue one of the following conclusions:
 - a) The study complies with the norms/standards of ethical research;
 - b) The study complies with the norms/standards of ethical research subject to the fulfillment of the reservation (conditional consent with amendments), which gives the researcher the right to begin the study only after making specific changes to the plan recommended by the Commission and/or submitting the requested additional information. In such a case, the submitted changes are evaluated by an expert in the relevant field (within the deadline set by the conclusion), who will confirm in writing to the Commission that the researcher has fulfilled the reservation;
 - c) The study does not comply with the norms/standards of ethical research.
- 8) The conclusion of the Commission shall be known to the interested party no later than 5 working days after the Commission meeting.
- 9) In special cases, the time for evaluating the study may be reduced or increased, for which a reasoned decision of the Commission is necessary.
- 10) The conclusion of the Commission is reflected in the protocol (decision) of the commission.
- 11) The researcher is given a copy of the protocol (decision) of the commission or an extract from the protocol (decision), which indicates the result of the study review and the conclusion of the Ethics Commission.
- 12) The researcher is obliged to inform the Research Ethics Commission about any substantial (radical) changes made to the research, which may necessitate a repeated ethical assessment of the research. Otherwise, the researcher shall not be entitled to publish the research on behalf of the university.
- 13) The terms of storage of research ethics records are determined by the legislation of Georgia, the Order of the Minister of Justice of Georgia No. 72 of March 31, 2010, and the Unified Procedures for the Conduct of Proceedings of the International Black Sea University LLC.

Article 7. Appealing the Decision

- 1) If the researcher disagrees with the conclusion of the Research Ethics Commission, he/she has the right to appeal the conclusion to the relevant school council within 3 working days of becoming acquainted with the decision.
- 2) The complaint must be substantiated. The complaint must include all the factual circumstances necessary for its consideration.
- 3) When considering a complaint by the relevant school council, a conflict of interest must be avoided. A person who is also a member of the Research Ethics commission or was a member of the commission at the time of making the appealed decision may not participate in the consideration of the issue.

- 4) The complaint shall be considered and a decision shall be made in accordance with the regulations of the school council, within 5 working days from the date of submission of the complaint.
- 5) The complaint shall be considered without the presence of the complainant.
- 6) The relevant school council shall have the right to make one of the following decisions:
 - a) Satisfying the complaint, which means leaving the conclusion adopted by the Research Ethics Commission unchanged;
 - b) Refusing the complaint, which means changing and/or completely canceling the conclusion adopted by the Research Ethics Commission;
- 7) The decision adopted by the council is final and is not subject to appeal.
- 8) The decision made by the relevant school council shall be sent to all interested parties within 3 working days of the decision.

Article 8. Final Provisions

- 1) Matters not regulated by this Regulation shall be regulated by the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education” and other internal normative documents of the International Black Sea University LLC.
- 2) This Regulation shall be interpreted in accordance with the legislation of Georgia, as well as the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education” and other internal normative documents of the International Black Sea University LLC, as well as the University’s Regulations and Research Development Policy.
- 3) This Regulation, as well as any amendments and additions made to it, shall be approved and enter into force by the order of the Rector.
- 4) This Regulation applies only to the research that is defined by the Regulation, the research standards carried out by students are regulated by the regulations and guidelines of the relevant program (see the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Master’s Thesis and Dissertation*).
- 5) The ethics of the doctoral dissertation within the framework of doctoral studies is assessed and regulated in accordance with the *Regulation of the Doctoral Studies and Dissertation Council* approved by the University.
- 6) Supervision of the implementation of this Regulation will be carried out by the Vice-Rector for Research in accordance with the rules established by the Legislation of Georgia and international norms in the field of research ethics.