# Ethics and Bio-Safety Policy

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<th>Version</th>
<th>1.0</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Code/Category</td>
<td>SU – 4.5.1/Ethics and Bio-safety</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To provide a comprehensive guide to all students and staff on SU’s ethical and bio-safety framework.</td>
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<td>Scope</td>
<td>The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for staff and students that ensures that Sohar University achieves the highest ethical and bio-safety standards. All activities at SU must take place within a context of mutual respect and professionalism, free from discrimination or harassment.</td>
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To achieve our Vision and fulfill our Mission, Sohar University expects all members of the staff and students to behave with integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership in all actions and behaviour. In addition, Sohar University also expects that all of its staff and students are committed to ensuring that the highest standards of health, safety and environmental protection are achieved for all research activities and laboratory-based work.

**Research:**

**Ethical issues:**
All research activities carried out at the University must be conducted in an appropriate manner to meet the cultural requirements of the country as well as to comply with the University’s general ethics requirements. Research Ethics include many aspects in which all should be well respected in order to approve any research project within SU.

The main issues of Ethics are as follows:

1. Involvement of human health and human participants in research.
2. The use of animals.
3. Possible damage to the environment, social, and personal data.

Research funding bodies, such as The Research Council - Oman (TRC), Qatar Foundation - Qatar (QF), The Australian Research Council (ARC) and Research Councils – UK, have their own research ethics regulations and requirements. Hence, research funds will only be granted to projects that meet their ethical policies. In such cases, the external body policies and requirements are in addition to the SU Research Ethics Policy.

Before embarking on any research or consultancy, the academic/Principal Research Investigator (PI hereafter) must consider whether the project is likely to raise any ethical considerations. Any such project that potentially involves ethical issues should be referred to the University Ethics Committee for consideration and approval. The responsibility for submission to the Ethics Committee rests with the academic/PI.

**Bio-Safety issues:**
No work with any biological agent or biohazardous materials shall be carried out until a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been completed. Risk assessments for work-related biological agents of hazardous materials must be reviewed and approved by the Ethical and Bio-Safety Committee prior to the commencement of the planned work.
Personnel:

- Staff need to foster the highest academic and professional standards and encourage the spirit of open and critical thought and enquiry, academic exchange and dialogue and expect the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour.
- Students need to create a supportive academic environment which ensures that learning is their central focus, combined with social, cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities to enable the full realisation of their potential for academic and personal development.
- Respect in a diverse student and staff community for different religious and cultural values.
- Equal opportunities for all staff and students of the University. Any discrimination based on gender, race, colour, religion, disabilities or age is unacceptable.
- Students need to be provided with a curriculum that is academically sound and relevant to the living requirement and society.
- As Ethics is one of the University’s Generic Skills, program courses must address this.
- Any harassment needs to be identified and addressed promptly with professionalism and care.
- SU aims to provide a working, teaching and learning environment that is free from unfair treatment, discrimination and where all are treated with respect and dignity. SU is responsible for providing staff and students with good resources and facilities including resources and facilities for registered disabled students and staff.
- SU seeks to ensure that all academic services are efficient and transparent, and that University resources are always used appropriately.
- SU encourages and supports high standards of staff-to-staff and staff-to-student relationship and conduct.
- All staff and students must comply with all SU rules and regulations.
- Staff and students need to comply with copyright policy.
- Staff must not use their position to exert influence over another for personal gain or gratification.
- Plaigarism is the failure to distinguish one’s work from the work of others, and is not acceptable by either students or staff.
- Staff and students need to foster the highest academic and professional standards and encourage the spirit of open and critical thought and enquiry, academic exchange and dialogue and expect the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour.

Finance:

- This section relates to investment, donation, gifts purchasing and research funds.
- Staff are required to use the best practices concerning any financial responsibilities.
- The University financial activities must be such that good value for money is achieved.
- Staff must ensure that all University transactions are compliant with the University Conflict of Interest Policy.
External Relations and Knowledge Transfer:

- SU requires that all external affairs are dealt with ethical consideration in the selection and development of any external relationship.

Bio-Safety:

Sohar University is committed to ensure that the highest standards of health, safety and environmental protection is achieved.

Wherever research or Lab work is carried out involving hazardous materials or biological agents within a faculty/department, the Dean/Head of Department shall appoint a suitable person to carry out the required functions of the Biological Safety, where they will be assigned the following duties:

- Ensure that sufficient training has been provided to staff/students to carry out the planned work.
- Ensure that the safety rules are carefully implemented including personnel, equipment, safe handling, storage, transport and disposal of hazardous materials as well as keeping the place safe after carrying out the work.
- Advise on risk assessment and its mitigation plan wherever possible.
- Liaise with the University’s Ethics and Bio-safety Committee on behalf of the faculty/department on risk assessments and the bio-safety approvals.
- Liaise with the University Health & Safety officer on all relevant issues.
- Ensure that all appropriate HSE are provided to the work team prior to the commencement of the work.

The Responsibilities of Projects’ Principal Investigators:

The Principal Investigator on each research project involving biological agents shall:

- Ensure that all work involving Hazard materials or bio-safety issues has received prior review and approval by the Ethics and Bio-safety Committee. This should be done by submitting risk assessment analysis to the Committee which must be supported by a statement from the Faculty Dean/Head of the Department or the Faculty/Departmental Biological Safety Officer.
- Establish risk registry records together with their comprehensive assessments and inform the Health and Safety officer on any significant risks.
- Ensure that all staff working in the project are fully aware of the hazards and risks associated with the work. In addition, ensure that all staff working in the project are fully trained and capable of handling the tasks properly including any emergency or accidental cases.
• Fully comply with this policy and provide appropriate supervision.

**Roles of Staff/Students**

Employees/students must fully comply with all measures to minimise the exposure to risks. They should only work according to the supervision/guidance of the project PI and follow all the instructions of the departmental Bio-Safety officer and the University Health and Safety Officer. They are also required to immediately report any lag/defect discovered in the work environment/equipment/materials.

**Information, Instruction and Training**

- Employees/students must be provided with information, instruction and training with regard to any work with potential bio-hazards.
- Bio-hazard signs should be displayed in proper locations.
- Evacuation plan in case of emergency should be displayed together with emergency phone numbers.

**Disposal of waste**

Arrangements for the biological waste disposals are managed by the University estate/service department under the supervision of the University health and safety officer.

Project PIs and Faculty Bio-Safety Officers should prepare and document proper waste assessment which should also include full information on the generated waste to be disposed off. Copy of the reports should be handed over to the University Health and Safety Officer with full information of the type of waste to be disposed off.

**University Ethics and Bio-Safety Committee (UEBC) Terms of Reference:**

The University Ethics & Bio-safety Committee (UEBC) reports to the University Academic Board and is responsible for overseeing all issues and considerations related to ethics and bio-safety at SU.

The Committee is responsible for:
- Upholding adherence to the University’s policies on Ethics and Bio-safety by all University staff and students who undertake or contribute to research activities at, or for, the University.
- Promoting awareness and understanding of research related ethical issues.
- Ensuring that all studies carried out at SU or by SU students or staff involving ethical issues are reviewed and approved.
- Considering, monitoring and providing guidance on any ethical matters related to research that are referred to it from the faculties or research-active staff.
• Monitoring and reviewing the risk potential for any accident involving biological agents on campus.
• Liaising with the Health and Safety department regarding any potential occupational health issues related to use and storage of biological materials and/or hazardous waste disposal.
• Reviewing the current policies and practices to ensure that all national and international standards, developments and initiatives are taken into consideration.
• Providing a status report to the Academic Board.

Composition
• The Director of Research and Industrial Collaboration (Chair)
• The Chair (or delegate) of the Risk Management Committee
• One member from each Faculty (nominated by the Dean)
• A person not employed by the University (nominated by the Chair of UEBC)
• RIC Secretary (Ex-officio secretary)
• Co-opted:
  • Health & Safety Officer

Frequency of Meetings
• Three times a year