AREA V
RESEARCH

I.10.2. faculty and students observe research ethics to avoid malpractices like plagiarism, fabrication of data, etc.

Parameter C – Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation And Utilization Of Research Results/Outputs

Faculty and students observe research ethics to avoid malpractices like plagiarism, fabrication of data, etc.

The University of Southern Mindanao (USM), through the Office of the Vice President for Research, Development and Extension (OVPRDE) and its Research Ethics Committee (RECO), implements established research ethics procedures to ensure that research activities involving human participants adhere to recognized ethical standards. These procedures are guided by the 2022 National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants issued by the Department of Science and Technology–Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD), as reiterated in OVPRDE Memorandum No. 05a, Series of 2025, on Ethics Standards and Procedures.

The university requires all research projects involving human participants, including student theses, faculty research, surveys, interviews, and other data-gathering activities involving people, to undergo the appropriate research ethics review. This requirement applies to studies that collect information directly from respondents and to studies using secondary data containing identifiable personal information. However, archival data from publicly available documents and summaries without names or identifying information do not require an ethics application under the stated guidelines. When uncertainty exists, researchers are encouraged to submit an application to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

The ethics review process begins with the preparation of the required documents, including the Research Ethics Application Form (Form 1.1), Research Protocol (Form 3), data collection instruments, informed consent form, and other applicable supporting documents. For research involving participants below 18 years old, an assent form and parental or guardian consent are required. A Legally Authorized Representative form is also necessary when participants cannot provide consent independently under the circumstances specified in the university guidelines. Researchers must clearly identify potential risks, explain

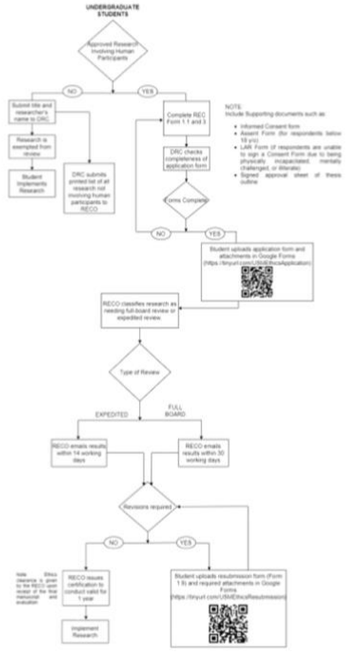
the measures for minimizing these risks, ensure that consent documents are understandable to participants, and demonstrate that their data collection methods are aligned with the study's objectives.

Before submission, the Department Research Coordinator (DRC) checks the completeness of the application and its supporting documents. Applications are submitted online to RECO from the first through the twentieth day of each month for inclusion in the monthly review; submissions received after the twentieth are considered in the subsequent month's review. The review may be expedited or conducted through a full board review, depending on the nature of the research. The memorandum indicates an estimated feedback period of 14 working days for expedited review and 30 working days for full board review. RECO may issue a Notice to Conduct or require revisions before the research proceeds.

Importantly, researchers may begin data collection only after their thesis proposal has been approved and they have received the Notice to Conduct from RECO. This procedure ensures that ethical considerations are addressed before participants are recruited or research data are collected. Following the completion of the study, researchers may request Ethical Clearance from RECO, subject to the university's requirements and the absence of unresolved participant complaints or concerns. The university distinguishes this post-study Ethical Clearance from the Notice to Conduct issued before data collection. Through these procedures, the university promotes respect for human dignity, protection of participants' rights and privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, and the minimization of potential harm. The involvement of trained ethics reviewers and Department Research Coordinators further strengthens institutional oversight and accountability. Overall, the research ethics procedures serve as an essential quality assurance mechanism that promotes responsible research conduct, protects research participants, and ensures that the university's research endeavors are carried out with integrity, transparency, and adherence to established ethical standards.

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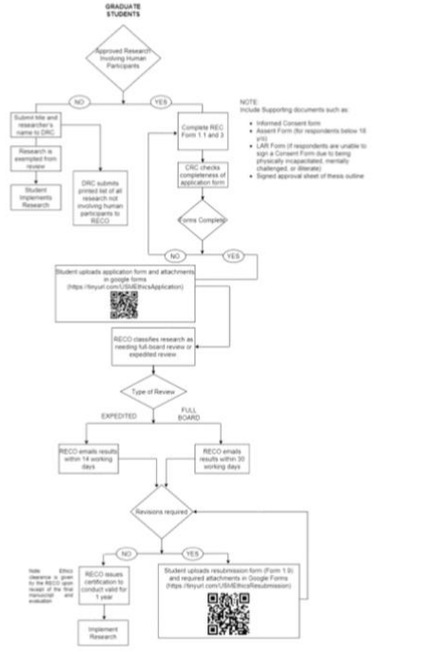


"UNITY IN DIVERSITY AND
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USM-SYS-F71-Rev.2.2023.12.29

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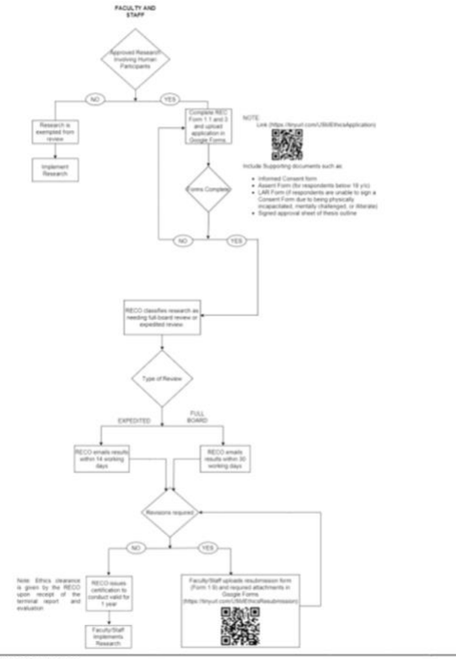


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To uphold academic integrity and promote responsible research practices, USM requires research outlines, manuscripts, dissertations, and other research reports to undergo plagiarism checking and AI detection using software subscribed to by the University. This procedure helps identify potential instances of plagiarism, inappropriate use of AI-generated content, and inadequate citation of sources. The process is governed by the existing USM Plagiarism Policy and Guidelines, ensuring consistency and accountability in the evaluation of research outputs.

The university implements a systematic review and approval process involving the major adviser, the College Research Coordinator (CRC), and the student researcher. Initially, the major adviser uploads the research outline or manuscript to the University's official text-matching software, selecting the option that prevents the submission from being stored in the database. References and appendices are excluded from the initial submission to ensure a more appropriate assessment of the manuscript's originality.

The major adviser evaluates the results based on established standards, including a maximum overall similarity index of 15% for undergraduate students and 10% for graduate students. Beyond the similarity percentage, the review examines whether key ideas and research findings are original, the content has been prepared without inappropriate AI-generated material, and no complete sentences or paragraphs have been copied from other sources. The adviser also ensures that cited references have actually been consulted, paragraphs are clear and coherent, and the literature is supported by relevant and updated scholarly sources. References published within the last five years are encouraged, while older sources should be accompanied by discussions of how the relevant studies have developed over time.

When the manuscript does not satisfy the prescribed requirements, the major adviser returns it to the student for revision and provides the necessary guidance. Once the manuscript meets the required standards, the major adviser signs it and forwards it to the CRC for further verification. The CRC then reviews the manuscript to

confirm compliance with the originality and academic writing requirements. If deficiencies remain, the manuscript is returned to the adviser for further revision and improvement.

After the CRC approves the manuscript, the major adviser uploads the final version, excluding preliminary pages and appendices, to the text-matching software and allows it to be stored in the repository. This final submission establishes a reference for comparison with future research outputs and strengthens the University's mechanisms for monitoring originality. The student researcher also certifies the originality of the paper through the prescribed certification form and submits it to the CRC.

Overall, the University's research writing and plagiarism-checking procedures demonstrate its commitment to producing credible, ethical, and academically sound research outputs. By integrating text-matching technology, AI detection, adviser supervision, and college-level verification, USM promotes responsible scholarship and reinforces the importance of originality, proper attribution, and critical engagement with scholarly literature. These measures help protect the integrity of student research, enhance the quality of theses and manuscripts, and support the University's broader goal of strengthening its research culture and ensuring that research outputs meet institutional and academic standards.

2.4 Research Writing

Research involves writing, from the proposal stage up to the final output such as a thesis manuscript, terminal report, or research publication. In all these cases, researchers are expected to produce original work.

Plagiarism Check and Artificial Intelligence Detection

Text-matching tools and artificial intelligence (AI) detection software provide an effective way to detect potential plagiarism and AI use based on exact matches with published and unpublished sources. USM shall subject all thesis outlines, manuscripts, dissertations, and other research reports (quarterly narrative progress reports and terminal reports) to plagiarism and AI detection using software subscribed to by the university. Plagiarism and AI detection of outline, manuscript or dissertation shall follow the existing USM Plagiarism Policy and Guidelines (see Section 3.5.h).

Originality and proper referencing of theses and research reports are overseen by the RDO Director and thesis advisers, respectively. Particular guidelines for student theses are as follows.

1. The major adviser uploads the student outline and manuscript in the official text-matching software used by the University, and chooses "No repository" so that the submission will not be stored in the database. References and appendices shall not be uploaded to the software.
2. The major adviser shall check for the following:
    a. the overall similarity does not exceed 15% for undergraduate students and 10% for graduate students;
    b. no key ideas central to the thesis (e.g., results) are plagiarized;
    c. content is not generated via artificial intelligence;
    d. no full sentences or paragraphs are entirely lifted from other sources;
    e. the student only cites references that he or she has actually read (note that an in-text citation marked by the text-matching software indicates that the citation was just copied from another source and the student has not read that source);
    f. the paragraphs are written in a clear and cohesive manner, with appropriate references to the scholarly literature.
    g. references are updated (i.e., to include references published within the last five years). Paragraphs that cite older references shall be followed by paragraphs that discuss how older studies have since developed within the past five years.
3. If any part of 2a through 2d is not satisfied, then the adviser returns the manuscript to the student and provides additional guidance as needed.
4. The major adviser shall sign the manuscript after verifying that parts 2a through 2d are all satisfied, and that the content passes the standards of an undergraduate thesis.
5. The student certifies that their paper is original (Appendix 23) and submits this form to the college research coordinator (CRC).

6. The CRC shall sign the thesis outline/manuscript after confirming that parts 2a through 2d are satisfied. If not, the CRC shall return the outline/manuscript to the thesis adviser for further revisions.
7. After the CRC approves the manuscript, the major adviser shall upload the final manuscript, excluding preliminary pages and appendices, to the text-matching software and choose to add the manuscript to the repository. This will allow the text-matching software to store the final manuscript in the database so that it can be compared with future submissions.