



Research Policy and Procedures



Date of Senate Approval: 28 May 2014

Revised Version submitted to Senate, 12 December 2014

Ownership: Research Officer

RESEARCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES

With more faculty members becoming research active, and with a growing number of students undertaking research as part of their undergraduate and postgraduate studies, it is timely to provide an overarching policy framework and associated procedures.

The essence of UniSey's evolving research policy – applicable to both faculty and student research – is as follows:

UniSey is committed to developing research that will be of direct value and application to Seychelles – in line with the nation's social and cultural traditions, and in its transition to a knowledge-based economy.

UniSey will ensure that research features strongly in the institution's overall profile of activities.

All researchers (students as well as faculty) will be encouraged to contribute to the achievement of this policy.

UniSey's Vision and Mission

In formulating this research policy, it is appropriate to start with the university's vision and mission. These set the benchmark for what follows.

Thus, the vision of UniSey is:

To be a recognised knowledge hub in the Indian Ocean, delivering solutions to the challenges of the 21st century and the university of choice for local as well as for regional students for their tertiary education.

In turn, the mission is:

- *To advance knowledge fostering excellence in teaching, learning and research.*
- *To foster an atmosphere of discovery, creativity and innovation.*
- *To build the human resource capacity required to help Seychelles achieve its development goals.*

It is clear that the development of a research culture is entirely consistent with the intentions of both the vision and mission of the university.

Unisey's Research

It is important to define what types of research are the subject of this policy.

Firstly, a distinction can be made between faculty research and student research:

- Staff research refers to work undertaken by UniSey faculty members, either individually or with others (who may or may not be members of the university).
- Student research refers to projects that are assessed as part of a taught undergraduate or postgraduate programme. In time, this category will be extended to include research degrees.

A second distinction refers specifically to research which leads to publication using UniSey's name, or is otherwise associated in the public mind with UniSey. All student projects will be included in this category. On the other hand, it is possible that some research conducted by faculty would not be included e.g. where an individual collects, say, details of garden plants for his or her personal interest.

Registering Research

Those types of research (as above) which are regarded as coming within the remit of UniSey's policy must be 'registered'.

Thus:

- (a) in the case of faculty, all designated researchers will be required to lodge with the Research Officer a summary of their proposal(s), and this information will be passed to the relevant Dean. In the case of group research involving participants from different Faculties, the relevant Deans will undertake the role jointly. In the event of potential conflict with UniSey's criteria (see next section), the researcher(s) will be invited to discuss the proposal in more detail with the relevant Dean what is proposed and to modify it if necessary. Where there is dispute, the Vice-Chancellor (who has direct responsibility for research at UniSey) will adjudicate.
- (b) In the case of students, all project proposals should first be lodged with the Programme Head, who will match them against UniSey's criteria before forwarding details for the class as a whole to the Research Officer. In the event of potential conflict with UniSey's criteria (see next section), the proposal(s) in question will be referred back to the Programme Head to negotiate a resolution. If still unresolved, the case will be referred by the Programme Head to the Research Officer for determination. In the case of dispute, the relevant Dean will adjudicate.

Academic Freedom

Research flourishes best where academics feel free to pursue their interests. Indeed, the principle of academic freedom is a basic quality of university life. At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that freedom can rarely be unbounded. Universities do not operate in a vacuum and will always need to take account of their context.

- One limit on what can be regarded as permissible is the question of ethics. UniSey, like other universities, will only wish to support research that can be seen to be ethical. In other words, research undertaken by university academics and/or students should not offend the moral code of society. It is common practice to set and monitor standards through a dedicated Ethics Committee and this practice will be adopted by UniSey.
- Another potential limit on what is permissible is whether some research (even though it might be ethical) would be at odds with the university's vision, mission and values. Thus, UniSey would not wish to support any research that is clearly inconsistent with what the university represents. At the same time, UniSey would prefer not to exercise a direct control on what is 'right' and 'wrong'. Instead, our preference is to define boundaries for such research by means of clearly designated criteria that will rely on the good judgement of individuals and the assistance of peer (or tutor) discussion and advice.
- Additionally, all universities (whether public or private) have responsibilities to their stakeholders and these should always be respected.

Thus, UniSey's researchers will be advised that:

the university will not wish to support any research which is clearly inconsistent with its vision, mission and values and/or which would otherwise bring the university into disrepute.

Research Ethics

All research that is undertaken in the name of UniSey (which, by implication, means all research undertaken by any of its staff or students in the public domain) must first be approved for its ethical content. An Ethics Application Form is available as an appendix to this document and is also posted on the UniSey website; it must be completed for all staff and student research.

In the case of staff and postgraduate research, the completed form must be submitted to the Research Officer for initial checking. This will in due course be considered by a specially constituted Ethics Committee. Membership of this committee will be chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and will include external stakeholders as well as the Research

Officer. Terms of reference for the UniSey Ethics Committee are included as an appendix to this document and is also posted on the website.

In the case of undergraduate student research, the completed form must be submitted to the respective Head of Programme. A Programme committee will be convened, to be chaired by the relevant Dean, to determine whether the research meets UniSey's ethical standards. Approval must be received before such research can proceed. It will be the responsibility of the Head of Programme to ensure that this procedure is followed and that students are notified of the status of their application.

Commitment to Research

By Academics

The university is committed to promoting research amongst its faculty for the following reasons:

- research is essential within any university in order to advance the cause of knowledge;
- applied research can be of direct benefit to the local society and economy;
- research-active faculty can inform their teaching and pass on their findings to students;
- research will also be an important criterion for faculty promotion and award of professorial titles.

Academics at UniSey are required to conduct research and engage in scholarship. The balance between these various functions and other tasks will, however, vary, depending on the priorities of the respective Faculty and the capabilities of the individual in question.

While undertaking research is a career expectation, it needs to be balanced with other obligations, notably, teaching and administration. The respective Dean and/or Head of Programme will discuss with the individual an appropriate workload.

In addition to members of faculty, UniSey wishes to encourage other (viz. non-faculty) members of the university to contribute to research. Depending on their research topic, non-faculty members will be aligned to one of the three Faculties to assist the management of their research.

By Students

Student research includes undergraduate and postgraduate course dissertations, as well as research undertaken as part of postgraduate research degree programmes. UniSey is committed to promoting research amongst its students for the following reasons:

- research is intellectually challenging and requires students to develop extra skills, over and above the requirements of a prescribed curriculum;
- the development of research skills may then be of value in the workplace;
- applied research can be of direct benefit to the local society and economy.

Students undertaking research will be supported by a supervisor (appointed by the respective Programme Head), who will, in turn, guide them through the whole research process.

Management of Research

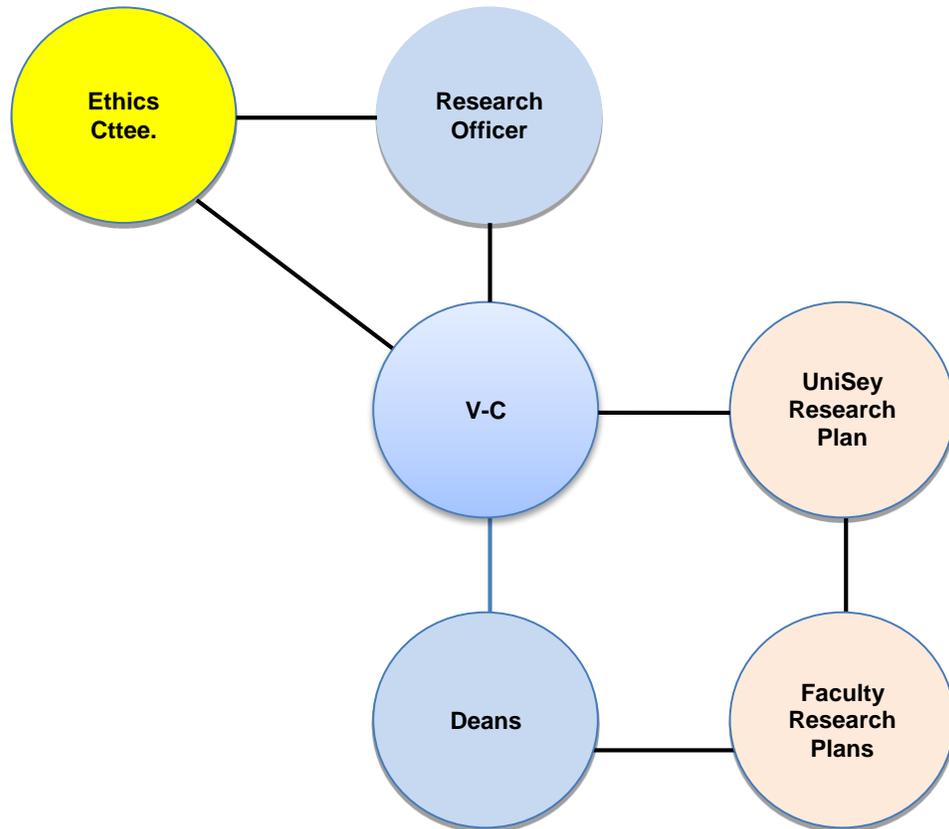
Part of the function of providing a research framework is to ensure that there is in place a clear system of management. The aim is to facilitate and guide the aspirations of researchers.

It is important that researchers are clear about who is responsible for doing what. Thus:

- (a) Across the university as a whole, the Vice-Chancellor has overall responsibility for the development of research and for the production of a UniSey Research Plan.
- (b) Within each Faculty, the Dean has overall responsibility for research (for students as well as faculty) and each Faculty Board is required to produce an agreed Research Plan.
- (c) In addition to the Vice-Chancellor and the Deans, there is a UniSey Research Officer, whose responsibilities include:
 - providing guidance and organizational support re. research development;
 - coordinating faculty and non-faculty research proposals for onward submission to the relevant Dean.
 - maintaining a record of ongoing and past research;
 - assisting in the production of a UniSey Research Strategy and Faculty Research Plans;
 - administering the work of the Ethics Committee;
 - identifying potential funding sources and advising applicants;
 - organizing a series of research seminars and guest presenters;
 - organizing at least one international conference annually;
 - organizing in-house publications and advising researchers on external journals; and
 - as a research leader, to undertake personal research.

The organization of the process is shown overleaf.

With the potential development of research at UniSey, the issue of whether to form a Research Committee and a properly constituted Research Unit will be reviewed. At this early stage, however, a more pragmatic approach is favoured. UniSey is still a small organization and unable to sustain too complex and expensive a research infrastructure.



Funding to Support Research

(a) Internal Funding:

Where possible, UniSey will provide at least initial funding to enable faculty and postgraduate research students to engage in research. Students on taught programmes will not be additionally funded. It is also recognized that for some research the main resource will be staff time, which the Dean and/or Head of Programme will seek to allocate.

Internal funding will be contractual and will specify outcomes. Progress will be regularly monitored by the Research Officer to ensure that the outcomes are achieved. Reports will be submitted to the respective Deans and the Vice-Chancellor.

A scheme of financial incentives for tangible research outcomes is currently under discussion as part of UniSey's Scheme of Service.

(b) External Funding

UniSey is a young university that has not yet accumulated sufficient reserves to support all of the research that is underway and proposed. As a result, academics who require substantial funding to support their research are expected to explore external sources and to apply accordingly. The Research Officer will assist in that process, including through the compilation of a data base of potential sources.

All applications for external funding need the support and signatures of the respective Dean and also the Research Officer. Such applications may have financial as well reputational implications for UniSey.

The Research Officer will keep a record of any income received from an external source and will ensure that it is administered through the Finance Office.

(c) Commissioned Research

Increasingly, as the reputation of UniSey's research grows, it can be expected that the university's researchers will be asked to undertake work for an external client.

The same procedures for approving the nature of the research, handling external monies and monitoring progress will be applied in these cases as for other externally funded projects.

Research Seminars and Publications

UniSey has a responsibility to advance and disseminate the application of knowledge, principally by publishing its research outcomes. As a first step, all researchers are required to deposit a copy of their published research findings (e.g. articles, papers, reports, conference proceedings and books) with the Research Officer, who will, in turn, inform others (inside and outside the institution) of their existence.

Where publisher's copyright permissions allow, and where there are no confidentiality or commercial constraints, these research publications must be freely and publicly accessible.

Authors must use a standardized institutional affiliation, 'University of Seychelles', in all research publications to inform others of the source of affiliation. Authors must also acknowledge the source of any grant funding received to support the research and subsequent publication. Further, they must comply with funders' policies relating to open access and research data management.

APPENDIX: UNISEY ETHICS COMMITTEE

UniSey requires that all research conducted under its name meets commonly acknowledged ethical standards. The achievement of this requirement will be assisted by the work of a dedicated Ethics Committee.

High and Low Risk Research

It is common practice in universities to categorise research in terms of low risk and potentially high risk:

- (a) 'Low risk' research would include investigations that are open and above board, and which are directed to a greater understanding of social, economic and political environmental phenomena e.g. trends in the health of the nation; the structure of the airline industry; measurement of the rise in sea level. This is not to suggest that there are not ethical considerations, particularly in regards to confidentiality, but, if managed correctly, these are generally considered to be 'low risk'.
- (b) 'High risk' research might include animal or even human experiments, most often designed to advance knowledge of medical or other issues. In these cases, it is vital to ensure that the subjects of the research are not physically or mentally harmed and, in any case, that they are fully aware of the implications.

All research proposals (whether high or low risk, and whether from students or staff) must be brought before the Ethics Committee for a decision on whether the research may proceed.

Presenting the Case

In order for the committee to assess the ethical nature of a proposal the following steps will be taken prior to each meeting:

- the Research Officer will compile a list of proposals for consideration;
- each proposal will be submitted by the respective researchers on a standard *pro forma* (designed by the Research Officer);
- the *pro forma* should be accompanied by an indication of how and from whom consent will be obtained in the course of the research;
- the *pro forma* should also require the researcher to acknowledge an understanding of plagiarism and the absolute need to avoid any suggestion that any aspect of the research will be plagiarised;
- the Research Officer will indicate whether each proposal should be considered as high or low risk, and whether additional expertise would be of value.

Terms of Reference

Against this background, the terms of reference of this committee are as follows:

- to ensure that all research conducted at UniSey meets commonly acknowledged ethical standards;
- to ensure that the researcher intends to notify all participants and obtain their written consent;
- to agree whether the proposed research should be considered as 'high risk' or 'low risk' (see definitions below);
- to determine whether specialist advice should be sought in the case of any research deemed to be 'high risk' (which may require the co-option of one or more experts for the purpose);
- to provide a decision on each case, with the following options:
 - agree that the research can proceed;
 - refer back for more information and/or minor changes;
 - defer to allow input of expert advisor(s)
 - reject in its present form.

Membership should comprise no more than three internal members (including the Vice-Chancellor, who will serve as Chair) and two external stakeholders, plus the Research Officer for committee support.

Ideally, all decisions should be taken within one month of submission. If necessary, this will be achieved through correspondence with committee members. In other respects, depending on the volume and complexity of applications, the committee will be convened quarterly.

APPENDIX: ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

PROJECT TITLE

PERSONAL DETAILS
a. Staff Research/ Student Research (Delete one)
b. If Student Research: Name Degree..... Course.....
c. If Staff Research: Name..... Status (e.g. Lecturer)..... Email address..... Faculty or Service
a. Details of Other Associated Researchers Name..... Status (e.g. Lecturer)..... Email address.....
b. Faculty or Service

PROJECT DETAILS
Co-investigators (if applicable)
Supervisor/s name
Project location
Project duration (Please note that no part of the research requiring ethical approval may commence prior to approval being given) a. Duration (years/months): b. Start date (expected) Completion date (expected).....

Proposed source(s) of funding and other ethical considerations
Sources of funding for the project (if applicable) <i>Name of funding body:</i>
<i>Status of proposal- if seeking funding (Please tick appropriate box)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> In preparation

<input type="checkbox"/> Submitted <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	Date of submission of proposal.....	Date of start of funding:
<i>Please indicate any ethical issues or conflicts of interest that may arise because of sources of funding e.g. restrictions on publication of results.....</i>		

DETAILS OF PROJECT

PROVIDE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT (Briefly Outline:

The objectives of the project:

Method(s) of data collection:

The benefits and scientific value of the project:

Method of recruitment:

Payments that are to be made/expenses to be reimbursed to participants:

Other assistance (e.g. meals, transport) that is to be given to participants:

Any special hazards and/or inconvenience (including deception) that participants will encounter:

State whether consent is required for (delete where not applicable):

- (i) the collection of data
- (ii) attribution of opinions or information
- (iii) release of data to others
- (iv) use for a conference report or a publication
- (iv) use for some particular purpose (specify)

Attach a copy of any questionnaire or interview schedule to the application

a. The research is strictly anonymous, an information sheet is supplied and informed consent is implied by voluntary participation in filling out a questionnaire for example (include a copy of the information)

YES **NO**

b. The research is not anonymous but it is confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form (include a copy of the consent form and information sheet)

YES **NO**

c. The research is neither anonymous or confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form (include a copy of the consent form and information sheet)

YES **NO**

d. Informed consent will be obtained by some other method (please specify and provide details)

YES **NO**

With the exception of anonymous research as in (i), if it is proposed that written consent will not be obtained, please explain why:

If the research will not be conducted on a strictly anonymous basis. State how issues of confidentiality of participants are to be ensured if this is intended (e.g. who will listen to tapes, see questionnaires or have access to data). Please ensure that you distinguish clearly between anonymity and confidentiality. Indicate which of these are applicable

- a. Access to the research data will be restricted to the investigator **YES** **NO**
- b. Access to the research data will be restricted to the investigator and their supervisor **YES** **NO**
- c. All opinions and data will be reported in aggregated form in such a way that the individual; persons or organizations are not identifiable. **YES** **NO**
- d. Other (please specify)

Procedure for the storage of, access to and disposal of data, both during and at the conclusion of the research. Indicate which are applicable:

- a. all written material (questionnaires, interview notes, etc) will be kept in a locked file and access is restricted to the investigator Y N
- b. all electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file and access will be restricted to the investigator Y N
- c. all questionnaires, interview notes and similar materials will be destroyed:
 - (1) at the conclusion of the research Y N
 - (2).....years after the conclusion of the research; or Y N
- (d) any audio or video recordings will be returned to participants and/or electronically wiped Y N
- (e) **If data and material are not to be destroyed** please indicate why and the procedures envisaged for ongoing storage and security

Feedback procedures. You should indicate whether feedback will be provided to participants and in what form. If feedback will not be given, indicate the reasons why.

Reporting and publication of results. Please indicate which of the following are appropriate. The proposed form of publications should be indicated on the information sheet and/or consent form.

- (a) publication in academic or professional journals Y N
- (b) dissemination at academic or professional conferences Y N
- (c) deposit of the research paper or thesis in the University Library (student research) Y N
- (d) other (please specify) Y N

NB: All investigators and (in the case of staff) the PV-C or Dean, or (in the case of students) the Head of Programme, must sign before an application is submitted for approval

