**APPROVED**

by UL Senate

Decision No. 2-3/49

26.04.2021.

**University of Latvia**

**RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY**

*No amendments to this document*

**I. GENERAL TERMS**

1. The research ethics policy (hereinafter – the policy) of the University of Latvia (hereinafter – the UL) includes the principles of responsible conduct of the UL staff in scientific research, where human subjects are involved as participants of the study, animals are studied, where dual-use or environmental risks exist.

2. The principles stipulated in the policy complement and specify the requirements for research ethics established in international documents and regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia.

3. The policy aims to protect the rights, health, safety, and dignity of the research participants, to ensure the welfare of experimental animals, to prevent harm to the research participants, society, and the environment, as well as to promote the reputation and excellence of the UL scientific institution. This aim is pursued while respecting the academic freedom of researchers and the scientific objectives of the research.

4. The principles defined in the policy shall be binding on the staff of the UL and those persons conducting research at the UL or in cooperation with the UL, as well as on the staff of the UL participating in research implemented by other institutions.

5. Adherence to the principles enshrined in the policy is the personal responsibility of each researcher when designing the research, during the conduct of the research, and in the compilation and publication of the research findings.

6. The policy covers:

6.1. research involving animals, where any live vertebrate other than human is used;

6.2. research involving human subjects, where personal data are obtained and processed;

6.3. research involving human subjects, where the physical participation, observation, or elicitation of opinions of research participants takes place;

6.4. research, where tissues, cells, or other biological samples of living or dead human subjects or animal vertebrates are obtained and/or used;

6.5. research that poses a risk to the environment;

6.6 dual-use research, where the results are used not only for the benefit of society but also to cause harm of any kind.

**II. PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH ETHICS**

7. The UL staff comply with the general principles of research ethics in their scientific activities:

7.1. The principle of respect for autonomy entails respect for the individual's freedom of choice and right to information. The researcher shall obtain informed consent from the prospective participant before interacting with the participant in the study and shall protect the rights of persons not capable of giving consent, by informing them to the extent possible, according to their capacity, and by obtaining informed consent from their legal representatives. Any person involved in the research has the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The informed consent process obliges the researcher to inform the participant of how to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation.

7.2. The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence require the researcher to assess the potential risks to human subjects, the public, animals, and the environment at all research stages from its inception to completion. The role of the researcher is to maximise the benefits to science and society and to anticipate and pre-empt any risks posed by the research. Where risks cannot be avoided, the benefits of the research must significantly outweigh the potential harms. Researchers are responsible for protecting the privacy of research participants and safeguarding the confidentiality of the information they provide.

7.3. The principle of justice requires that benefits and harms resulting from research be distributed fairly, avoiding discrimination against individuals or groups of society.

**III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH ETHICS**

8. The principal investigator (researcher) shall ensure that the staff of the UL involved in the study are aware of and comply with the principles set out in the policy, as well as with the requirements of the Republic of Latvia, the European Union and other international regulatory enactments, as well as with the field-specific requirements.

9. Academic staff monitor compliance with research ethics principles and legislation in student research.

10. Prior to the commencement of the study, the principal investigator (researcher) shall obtain the authorisation and approvals required by the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, including the approval of an authorized external research ethics committee or a monitoring organisation.

11. Where the research does not require the opinion of the external ethics committee specified in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia, the researcher shall obtain the opinion of the UL Research Ethics Committee of the respective field of science on the research referred to in § 6 of the policy, conducted by the UL academic and scientific staff and by students in residency and doctoral studies, prior to its commencement.

12. The statutes and the composition of the UL Research Ethics Committee shall be approved by the Rector by a UL Ordinance.

13. The UL Research Ethics Committees issue field-specific research ethics guidelines, which are approved by the UL in compliance with the procedure established by the UL.

14. The procedure for the assessment of ethical aspects of research undertaken by students, except for students in residency and doctoral studies, as referred to in § 6 of this policy shall be determined by the faculties of the University of Latvia. Where appropriate, the Faculty Council shall approve the statutes and membership of the Research Ethics Committee for the review of student research.

15. The research referred to in § 6 of the policy and implemented by the staff of the University of Latvia in cooperation with other scientific institutions of the Republic of Latvia, shall require the opinion of only one competent ethics committee of one institution or the external ethics committee specified in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia.

16. The research referred to in § 6 of the policy and implemented by the staff of the University of Latvia in cooperation with foreign partners, shall receive the opinion of the external ethics committee specified in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia or the opinion of the UL Research Ethics Committee of the respective field on the part of the research implemented in the Republic of Latvia.

**IV. FINAL PROVISIONS**

### 17. As from the date of entry into force of this policy, the UL Senate Decision No 289 as of 25.02.2013 "On the University of Latvia Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human and Animal Subjects" shall become null and void.

Senate Chair (signature[[1]](#footnote-1)∗) M. Auziņš

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To be circulated to: all departments

1. ∗**THIS DOCUMENT IS ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED WITH A SECURE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE AND CONTAINS A TIME STAMP** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)