

**Annex B to QC Manual - Word document template**

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Enhancement of HE Research Potential Contributing to Further Growth of the WB Region
Re@WBC

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Abstract	The following document is a report on the current situation of the ethics committee at UV.
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Report on the current situation of the ethics committee at UV

All Albanian universities are at present implementing the new law on higher education. Regarding ethics, in article 44 of the new law, the establishment of an ethics committee is provisioned as follows:

Article 44
The institution's ethics committee

1. An ethics committee is set up in the Higher Education Institutions. It promotes and investigates issues related to ethics in teaching and research and other institutional activities.
2. The committee's organizational and operational rules are laid down in the HEI's Statutes as well as in their internal Regulations.

As it can be noted, article 44 very generally outlines the role of the ethics committee. At present, all Albanian HEI are awaiting the new bylaws to come out so that they can implement the new law successfully. No new bylaw which regulates and defines the aims, objectives and tasks of the EC has come out.

So far, the EC has operated based on article 17 in the past law on HE, which defined EC as follows:

Article 17
Ethics committee

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An ethics committee is set up at the HEI, which discusses issues of academic life. It addresses proposals to the rector regarding these issues.

3. The members of the ethics committee are selected by the Academic Senate. Ethics committees can be set up at the faculties too.
4. The composition, duties, obligations, organization and function of the ethics committee are laid down in the HEI's Statutes as well as in their internal Regulations.

Article 13 in the university's Statutes which defines the EC as follows:

Article 13

1. The ethics committee is a collegial body that discusses ethical issues of academic life and presents proposals about these issues to the rector.
2. The members of the ethics committee are selected by the Academic Senate after having been proposed by the rector upon the faculties' proposals. The ethics committee is composed of five members who eventually elect their chair by secret ballot. In any circumstance, 2/3 of the membership can ask for vote of confidence for any member of the ethics committee.
3. The ethics committee proposes the Code of Ethics to the university's Academic Senate.
4. The revision of complaints, decisions, sanctions and their execution are laid down in the university's regulation.
5. The ethics committee are entitled to propose measures against employees who breach any of the ethical norms defined in the Code of Ethics.

The present Code of Ethics is far too general and consists of articles that attempt to regulate ethics in several directions: teaching, conduct and research. The ethics committee at UV has so far examined cases which foresee breaches of conduct. Issues of academic misconduct, fraud, plagiarism and so on have been poorly addressed. The code regulates ethics in research only in two of its articles, article 13, which is about intellectual property and article 14, which is about academic cheating or plagiarism.

The present legal framework that regulates ethics in research and publication in Albanian HEIs is a Regulation approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, No. 105, date 23.3.2012. Unfortunately, the regulation has been scarcely implemented. Although the Regulation outlines the principles of ethics in research, defines unethical behaviour and the like, there is still a need for a more detailed legal framework that addresses all aspects of ethics in research and of scientific integrity and that is handy to use by the institutions and researchers. What is more, ethical issues have often been addressed during promotion procedures or thesis defence procedures to account for scientific integrity and have usually not been dealt with by the ethics committees, but by the promotion or evaluation committees.

At present UV is revising the role, tasks and composition of the ethics committee(s) along the following lines:

Key roles and responsibilities

Roles:

- Consider how good a research proposal/master's thesis/doctoral thesis is in terms of research ethics.
- Identify ethical issues in the research proposals submitted for funding.
- Monitoring staff promotion procedures.

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- Identifying issues of plagiarism.
- Any other issues related to breaches of ethics in academic conduct.

Responsibilities:

- Gather and discuss the official framework or guidelines for assessing ethics in research.
- Write periodical reports on ethical issues regarding research proposals submitted for funding.
- Intervene institutionally in case of doubt that ethical issues are present as regards academic misconduct, plagiarism, promotion procedures, etc.
- Have their say in academic promotion and thesis defence in accordance with their duties.

Some of the challenges we expect EC to face are:

- Pressure (internal and external).
- Need to be informed and flexible about the range of ethical issues in research and the ways to deal with them.
- Lack of research capacities and facilities at the university that allow researchers to meet the ethical requirements.

Remarks

It can be said that there is a strong need to restructure the ethics committees at the University of Vlores along updated lines, which clearly define the role, tasks, and duties of EC. The investigation of ethics in the academia often involves two main issues: scientific/academic integrity and research ethics. It appears there is no clear-cut distinction between the two. At UV like in many other partner institutions there is one or some ethics committees but no scientific integrity board or committee. For a small university like UV, one ethics committee with a focus on both research ethics and scientific/academic integrity might be enough. What remains problematic is how these committees will deal with both properly and effectively, and with increasing awareness about ethics in research.

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