

Best Practice Guide on Academic Ethics for Research Projects Involving Students' Degree Theses and Dissertations by the National Science and Technology Council

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As the government agency responsible for academic research policy and development, the National Science and Technology Council (hereinafter the Council) recognizes that academic ethics are crucial for pursuing excellence in scientific research and serve as self-disciplined regulations of research conduct for academic communities. To foster a healthy academic environment and research culture in Taiwan, the Council has established a set of academic ethics guidelines that researchers must strictly adhere to when applying for and receiving any academic rewards, research projects, or other related subsidies from the Council.

It is common for principal investigators (hereinafter PIs) to mentor students (with status of part-time assistants) in conducting research projects funded by the Council. The projects, reports, or derivative works (e.g., journal articles, monographs, and conference papers) sponsored by the Council may overlap with the content in students' degree theses or dissertations or in PIs' pilot studies supported by other research subsidies. Therefore, academic ethical issues may arise during project application, execution, and closing phases.

The Council endeavors to promote continuity in academic research experiences while cultivating the next generation of researchers. It is recognized that differences exist among academic fields, and scholar collaboration varies. Moreover, academic research involves complex scenarios, uncertainties, and cross-disciplinary collaborations. With the goals of assisting PIs and participating researchers in smoothly executing research projects, fulfilling their responsibilities in supervising students in research, thesis and dissertation work, and preventing violations of academic ethics, the following guidelines are provided for researchers to follow and practice in their research:

1. **Foster a healthy research environment and attitude:** PIs shall provide clear and positive guidance and supervision on academic ethics to the research team (including part-time student assistants) and set up management mechanisms for research procedures and publication processes. Research teams shall adhere to the academic ethics regulations when conducting research and contributing to creating an environment that encourages responsible research conduct.
2. **Disclose relevant degree theses and dissertations in the research proposal:** If the project proposal content involves the degree theses or dissertations of students supervised by the PI, this shall be clearly disclosed or referenced in the proposal. The PI shall properly disclose completed work in the project application form and not deceive published research findings (including those from the degree theses and dissertations of students) as proposed project content. The PI shall avoid misleading reviewers' assessment of research originality and its significance.

3. **Disclose relevant degree theses and dissertations in the project report:** PIs shall reference all published research findings related to the research project (e.g., published work and students' theses or dissertations) in mid-term progress reports and final reports.
4. **Adhere to the authorship principles:** When publishing the research findings (such as journal articles or conference papers), if the content references students' degree theses or dissertations, PIs shall list the students as the coauthors or list them in the acknowledgement, depending on the students' contributions; or list those with significant scholarly contributions to the publication as coauthors. Additionally, research publications shall acknowledge grant received from the Council.
5. **Disclose student participation in the Council's research project:** If students' degree theses or dissertations include the outcomes of research project as a part, the theses and dissertations are suggested to disclose the contributions of the PIs and participating researchers, and acknowledge grant received from the Council.

Note: Whether a researcher who applied for or received any academic rewards, research projects, or other related subsidies has committed a violation of research ethics, the Council will apply its standard procedures and relevant review guidelines, making decisions on a case-by-case basis. Academic affairs pertaining to the supervisory role of teachers in the research process fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for formulating the Teachers' Act, the Degree Conferral Act, the University Act, and the Principles for Handling Academic Ethics Cases in Universities/Colleges. In accordance with relevant regulations, supervisors shall be responsible for supervising students in completing their degree theses and dissertations.