



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

RESEARCH AND ETHICS POLICY

Revised 2014

Research and Ethics Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide an ethical framework for undertaking research by Ministry staff, as well as all visiting researchers, scholars or experts working in conjunction with any person or division of the Ministry of Education and Training.

This policy is to a large extent based on the Research Manual for Teachers compiled by Dr. Se'ula Johannson-Fua and published by the Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE). Ministry staff and or any other person that intends to carry out research in Tonga either independent of, or in conjunction with MET are encouraged to read and become familiar with this Policy and the guidelines provided in the Research Manual for Teachers.

Research conducted by Ministry staff should be guided by the principles contained in this policy. This policy should also provide guidance to consultants and researchers outside the Ministry that intend to conduct research in Tonga, with the assistance of Ministry officials.

It will be the duty of any researcher to acknowledge the source of information obtained during the course of research. The Ministry will also require a copy of the researcher's report to be made available for the Ministry's archives.

2. Organisation Scope

This is a Ministry wide policy and applies to all staff of the Ministry of Education and Training. It applies to the following persons:

- (a) All employees of the MET;
- (b) Independent contractors to MET;
- (c) Adjunct and visiting staff
- (d) Visiting scholars and interns
- (e) Any other persons providing services to the Ministry.

3. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Ethics: a set of rules that is used to guide a person's behaviour in relation to others

Research ethics: a set of rules used to guide a person when conducting research

4. Policy Content and Guidelines

4.1 Tonga Government Research Policy

According to His Majesty's Cabinet Decision on 12th May 2011, the following be approved as the Government Research Policy.

- (a) Research applications must provide a detailed description of the research project proposal endorsed by the Head of Faculty of University or Institution concerned;
- (b) Evidence of sufficient financial support or funding arrangements for research in Tonga;
- (c) Proposed starting and finishing dates for the research;
- (d) Evidence of medical fitness to carry out research work;

- (e) Evidence of return ticket at completion of research work;
- (f) A written and signed statement of willingness to abide and adhere to the research conditions and submit two completed copies of research at no charge;
- (g) Abide by the Ministry of Education [and Training] Research and Ethics Policy;
- (h) The decision to grant research permission lies within the sole discretion of the Prime Minister's Office, in consultation with relevant ministries, and may be withdrawn at any time during the research, without being bound to give reasons for the decision.

4.2 Purpose of Research Ethics

In the broadest sense, “ethics” refers to a set of rules that are used to guide one’s behaviour in relation to other. Ethical conduct is used to describe a desirable behaviour.

In the Tongan context, desirable behaviour is contained in the principal of faka’apa’apa (respect) and further encapsulated in the four tenets of Tongan culture – ‘ofa (love); feveitokai’aki (reciprocity); lototō (humility); and mamahi’l me’a (commitment).

Based on the belief that ethics are culturally based, it is to the advantage of the researcher that the ethics that guide research are based on the culture upon which we are conducting our research. A researcher must do this in order to access knowledge and build relationships between him or herself and the participant(s), and to ensure that –

- a) Knowledge gained is authentic;
- b) Knowledge accessed is understood within the context, thereby ensuring justice is given to the giver of knowledge as well as for the “borrower” of knowledge;
- c) Knowledge is used for the benefit of the giver of knowledge;
- d) The research process is constantly monitored according to the research ethics set out;
- e) Research ethics are set in place to guide how researcher related to participants, and also
- f) Research ethics are displays in the form of behaviour, speech, dress code, body language;
- g) The researcher is held accountable to the people from who he or she has collected the data.

4.3 Key features of Tongan Research Ethics

The research ethics used for the Tongan context is based on Tongan core values. Some of those core values to include:

Fe’ofa’aki	mutual love, caring, generosity
Faka’apa’apa	respect
Feveitokai’aki	reciprocity, cooperation, consensus
Mamahi’l me’a	humility, generosity
Fetokoni’aki	sharing, cooperation, fulfilment of mutual obligations

4.4 Using Tonga Guidelines in the Ethical field

4.4.1 Fluency in language

It will be to the benefit of the researcher if he or she is able to speak fluent Tongan and is competent in the use of appropriate and respectable language.

4.4.2 Dress Code

A research is required to dress appropriately, respecting the norms of Tongan culture. When out in the field, a researcher should wear a kiekie or ta’ovala if appropriate.

4.4.3 Cultural Competency

A researcher should be culturally competent. He or she must know how to behave appropriately in each particular setting.

4.5 Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE) Research Guidelines

The Ministry has adopted the following guidelines for ethical research:

Self determination

The freedom of each person to make their own decision about participation in research.

Informed consent

Consent is informed if the intended participant has been provided with a clear, easily understood explanation of the research, activities and the expected outcomes. Consent should be in writing, although at times, oral consent may be appropriate.

Confidentiality

Information must always be handled in a way that protects the confidentiality of subjects and ensures the safe custody of data.

Anonymity

The findings should be conveyed in such a way that the participants(s) cannot be identified, unless a prior agreement has been obtained from the participant(s) to be identified.

Beneficence

In planning specific research procedures and conducting pilot and mainstream research, the researcher must ensure that the risk of physical and psychological harm to participants is kept to an absolute minimum.

Truthfulness and integrity

Deception is not acceptable in doing research with humans. Participants must never be misled about the purpose of the study.

Justice

There is an ethical obligation on the researcher to treat each person in accordance with what is morally right and proper.

De-briefing

After data has been collected, the researcher must provide the participant with a full clarification of the nature of the study and remove any misconceptions that may have arisen.

Addressing negative consequences

Where procedures might result in undesirable consequences, the researcher has the responsibility to detect them and have mechanisms available to remove or correct any consequences.

Publication and reporting of findings.

A responsible researcher should announce his or her findings and implication with great qualification and caution.

Acknowledgement of source of information

The researcher must acknowledge the source of his or her information. It is also good practice to provide a copy of the report to the participant and any other party that contributed to its contents.

4.6 Process for gain access to the field

Prior to entering the research field, a researcher must do the following in order to gain access to the field:

- a) Obtain formal letter of approval from the Ministry to conduct research
- b) Draft a letter of participation addressed to the likely participant outlining the intended research
- c) Draft a consent form to accompany letter of participation

- d) If possible, the researcher should visit the likely participant in person to gauge the willingness of the participant to participate in the study.

5. References

Tonga Institute of Education Research Manual for Teachers, 2009.

6. Appendices

Cabinet Decision Re: Government Research Policy 2011

7. Approval Agency

Minister of Education and Training

8. Approval Dates

This policy was originally approved on: 2011

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This policy will be reviewed: 2014

9. Policy Sponsor

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