

Ethical Issues and Standards of Responsible Research Conduct and Monitoring in an Adventist Institution of Higher Learning - The Babcock Experience

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Ethical issues and standards of responsible research conduct involving human participants are important considerations in any institution of higher learning and in particular Adventist institutions. This has a profound scriptural basis: “Justice and judgement are the habitations of thy throne, mercy and truth shall go before thy face” and “so whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them...”. These ethical issues include ensuring the safety and well-being of research participants, obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, and avoiding conflicts of interest. Research conduct and ethics are reviewed and approved before they begin by the Babcock University Health Research Ethics Committee (BUHREC). BUHREC is licensed every two-year by the National Health Research Ethics Committee of Nigeria (NHREC), Federal Ministry of Health and guided by the National Health Research Ethics of 2007. Beyond, BUHREC has the overarching mandate of the University administration to ensure Adventist beliefs and ethos in all our research at all levels. BUHREC is composed of 26 individuals with expertise and research experience in various academic fields including health, law, science, management and social sciences, religious and Islamic studies, Church history and cultural studies, and a community representative. BUHREC also provides education for researchers from 39 departments across 11 schools on ethical issues, responsible research conduct and creation science. This includes areas such as research integrity, informed consent, data management, conflicts of interest and proposal approval workflow process. In 2022, BUHREC reviewed 881 research proposals including 364 graduate proposals, 681 were approved, 133 declined and 67 pending. In 2021, 997 proposals were processed, 562 at graduate level, 895 approved, 76 declined and 26 pending. Thus, BUHREC oversight function on ethical issues and standards of responsible conduct of research through proposal evaluation, training of researchers, and a culture of research integrity have engendered improved research quality and productivity at Babcock University. Ethical issues encountered during the review process and their resolution will be discussed.