ATPS RESEARCH AND ETHICS POLICY

This document establishes the principles and practices for research ethics at the ATPS.

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Preamble

This research ethics guidance document sets out the procedure and expectations for the conduct of research by ATPS researchers, staff or external researchers contracted by ATPS. These research ethics guidelines relate to the specific requirements governing the conduct of research to ensure adherence to appropriate ATPS ethical values and principles.

1. Research Ethics Policy

1.1 Definitions

The following definitions are hereby adopted by the policy.

a) Honesty in all aspects of research includes the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; reporting on research methods and procedures; methods of gathering data; using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.

b) Rigour, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards in: performing research and using appropriate methods; adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; drawing interpretations and conclusions for the research; and communicating the results.

c) Transparency and open communication: in declaring conflicts of interest; the reporting of research data collection methods; the analysis and interpretation of data; making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.

d) Care and respect for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.

e) Accountability of funders, employers and researchers to collectively create a research environment in which individuals and organisations are empowered and enabled to own the research process. Those engaged with research must also ensure that individuals and organisations are held to account when behaviour falls short of the accepted standards

1.2 Purpose

1.2.1 This policy aims at setting out a framework and guidelines for researchers, and staff involved in research-related activities. It aims to promote ethical research practice and ensure that researchers and staff abide by the highest ethical standards possible. It is intended to:

a) Provide a framework to protect both researchers and participants with whom researchers interact;
b) Protect the integrity and reputation of ATPS;
c) Promote a culture within ATPS whereby researchers and staff reflect on the ethical implications of their research;
d) Guide researchers and staff to adhere to best practices concerning research ethics.

1.2.2 For this document, "**must**" means mandatory; "**may**" means desirable; "**should**" means advisable, "**harm**" refers to any physical or psychological negative effect experienced by a living entity, i.e. person or environment, "**Beneficence**" refers to doing positive good and "**Non-Maleficence**" means doing no harm.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all those who conduct, participate, manage or disseminate the results of research undertaken on behalf of ATPS. All research carried out at ATPS is subject to the doctrines and ethical standards described in this policy.

1.4 Policy Statement

The policy shall apply to all research undertaking by ATPS including research involving human participants and collection of personal data.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Responsible STI Advisory Committee

Responsible STI advisory committee members constitute two (2) ATPS Board of Governors members, the ATPS Executive Director, ATPS Director of Research and an invited international STI expert. The committee is responsible for agreeing best practices concerning research ethics and reviewing research submitted by researchers and staff of ATPS. The Responsible STI Advisory Committee duties entail the following:

a) Promote best practice in respect of the management of ethical issues.
b) Review and make recommendations on ATPS Ethics Policy.
c) Provide advice to researchers and staff on ethical issues arising from research.
d) Promote awareness and competent practice of research related to ethical issues.

e) Guide the Principal Investigators when the documentation submitted is insufficient for the Committee to make an informed decision.

2.2 Principal Investigator/Researchers

Principal Investigators/Researchers must:

i) Conduct all research to the highest ethical standards possible.
ii) Ensure beneficence and Non-maleficence practices are observed keenly.
iii) Always seek ethical approval before commencing the research when required.
iv) Seek formal ethical approval for research involving human participants and personal data.
v) Ensure consent is obtained from specific countries that ATPS is to conduct research.
vi) Adhere to all rules or codes of good practice relevant to the research they are conducting.
vii) Abide by the outcome of the research ethics review
viii) Ensure that commitment to research does not cause harm to participants and stakeholders and the environment.

3. Confidentiality and Data Protection

In case research involving human participants such as interviews or collecting personal data, participants' confidentiality must be preserved at all times. The identity or any information that collectively might reveal the identity of a participant must not be released without prior consent. Procedures must be followed for protecting the privacy of participants and may include:

a) Data must be secured using passwords on electronic files and a safe place for physical files.
b) Data should be documented securely and confidentially for any requirements from the Responsible STI advisory committee.
c) Must use sole identifiers or pseudonyms instead of names where fitting
d) Should store all data in a locked/coded file on ATPS data storage media.
e) Should ensure any removable storage media (e.g. USB drives or laptops) are encrypted.
f) Must dispose of all paper documents containing personal information in a way that protects the identity of participants.

3.1 Informed consent

Consent must be obtained from all research participants before conducting interviews, focus groups or administering surveys (among other methods). This consent can be obtained using the Participant Consent Form in Appendix 1. Participants who do not give consent should not be included in the research process. They must be fully aware of the aims of the research and the source of funding for the research. They must also have a clear grasp of how the data is going to be used and by whom.

4. Publication of research findings

a) Researchers must share all research findings with appropriate parties unless major confidentiality issues arise and subject to the guidelines above or contractual provisions.
b) Financial support must be recognised in all reports of research outcomes, both to acknowledge the support and ensure transparency.
c) Principles of research ethics must be also applied when publishing and disseminating research electronically or in any other form of dissemination.
d) Appropriately acknowledge all researchers who have contributed to the development of results and dissemination following the particular publication's definition of authorship.
e) Researchers must comply with the local and international copyright laws and regulations in force related to writing and publishing royalty, such as indicating citation sources.
f) Researchers shall not add any name that did not play a role in the scientific publication or omits the names of contributors in the research who meet the author's conditions mentioned.

5. Research Misconduct

[1]Research misconduct means fabrication, falsification, collusion or (self) plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Non-compliance with the Research Ethics Policy will be considered as research misconduct. Examples include:

a) Failing to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research.
b) Deception related to research proposals.
c) Illegal use of information which was acquired confidentially
d) Falsification, fabrication, corruption or inappropriate disclosure of research data.

[1] www.hhs.gov

e) Alteration of research outcomes, by misrepresentation or omission of data that do not fit expected results.
f) Deliberate misinterpretation of results.
g) Publication of believed or known to be false or misleading data.
h) Inappropriate acknowledgement of authorship.
i) Fraud or another misuse of research funds or research equipment.
j) Camouflage or collusion of research misconduct by others.

6. Review

The Policy shall be reviewed every five years or when required.

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1 - Participant Consent Form

1. **The Title of Research Project:**

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2. **Briefing about Research Project:**

3. **Information for Participants:**

4. **Principal Investigator Contact Details:**

Name: …….
Address: …….
Postcode: ……City: ……Country: …….……...
Email: ……Telephone: …….

5. Consent Statement:

I *(participant*)……. agree to take part in this research and I am aware that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, although if I do so, I comprehend that my information might still be used in an organised form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in harmony with the ATPS research ethics policy.

Signature: …… Date: …….
Email: ……Telephone: …….