

Admissions & Evaluation Policies

Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC)

Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT)

Sindh Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS)

August 8, 2019

Amended on March 19, 2020

Addendum added on July 16, 2020

Addendum: "Covid Policies, Academic Year 2023," added on March 29, 2022

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Section 1 – Admissions Policy and Procedures for Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics

1. Dissemination of Program Information

At the commencement of the admission cycle, information regarding the admissions process will be displayed on the CBEC website. Additionally, information will be disseminated through newspaper advertisements, social media platforms, email lists and any other means available.

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2. Program Objectives

The primary objective of the yearlong Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD) is to provide professionals associated with healthcare a comprehensive introduction to bioethics as a multidisciplinary field, within a developing world context. The ultimate aim of the PGD is to enable students to become catalysts for bioethics education within their parent institutions.

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3. Admissions Criteria

- a. The PGD is open to Pakistani and foreign applicants with graduate (Bachelor of Arts/Science, MBBS, BDS, etc.) or postgraduate degrees (Master’s, PhD, etc.) in fields such as medicine, dentistry, nursing, biological sciences, social sciences, etc. working within healthcare related institutions in educational, clinical, health administration or research related capacities, preferably at mid-career levels.
- b. Applicants are expected to have adequate command over English in order to participate in class discussions and handle reading and writing requirements.
- c. Applicants should possess basic competency in computer and web-based skills.

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4. Applications Requirements

- a. Applicants are required to submit electronic copies of the following supporting documents by the given deadline:
 - i. Completed electronic application form on CBEC website
 - ii. Curriculum vitae

- iii. Scanned attested copies of basic qualification and postgraduate degree(s) (if applicable)
- iv. Scanned letter of support from relevant institutional head
- v. Essay on a given topic
- vi. Two letters of recommendation emailed in confidence by applicant's referees directly to the Chairperson of CBEC
- vii. Scanned copy of passport sized photograph
- b. If selected, applicants will be required to submit hard copies of attested qualifications/degrees and two passport sized photographs.
- c. Incomplete applications will not be processed.

(See [Appendix 1.1 – Sample Letter of Support](#))

(See [Appendix 1.2 – Letter of Recommendation Requirements](#))

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5. Concurrent Enrolment

- a. Applications from individuals already enrolled in a program that partly or fully overlaps with PGD will not be entertained.
- b. Students enrolled in the PGD are not allowed to enroll in a concurrent program until they have completed all requirements of the PGD program.

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6. Admissions Procedure

- a. CBEC has a merit based admissions policy with no discrimination on the basis of gender, age, religion or ethnicity.
- b. Applicants from disadvantaged parts of Pakistan who meet selection criteria may be given weightage.
- c. Short listed candidates are invited for interviews with the Admission and Selection Committee.
- d. Interviews are conducted at CBEC in Karachi with a panel comprised of Admission and Selection Committee members. If required, interviews may also be conducted in other cities through Skype or similar means.

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7. Admission and Selection Committee

- a. The Admission and Selection Committee is constituted of CBEC faculty and may include external members.
- b. The Committee oversees the interview process and the selection of applicants.
- c. Appeals regarding the Committee's decisions can be made to the Chairperson of CBEC whose decision will be final.

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Section 2 – Evaluation Policy for Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics

The Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC) offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD). This yearlong intensive program consists of four modules taught in CBEC interspaced with distance learning components involving continuous assessment in the intervening months. The following policy sets down details pertaining to the different modes employed for evaluating students through the program.

1. Criteria for Receiving Diploma

It is mandatory to succeed in all components of the program, in order to be awarded a diploma. These include:

- a. Maintaining an average of at least 60% marks (C grade) throughout the program
- b. Successfully passing all mandatory assignments/activities

Award of Certificate in Lieu of Diploma

At the discretion of the faculty, PGD students who are dropped from the program may be offered certificates for Research Ethics and/or Clinical Ethics modules they have successfully completed. The faculty's decision in this case will be final.

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2. Modes of Evaluation

The Postgraduate Diploma Program uses the following modes of student evaluation through the year:

- a. Contact Sessions
 - i. Module Presentations
 - ii. Class Participation
 - iii. Other modalities, such as MCQs, quizzes, etc.
- b. Distance Learning Components
 - i. Must Respond Assignments
 - ii. Blog participation
 - iii. Other modalities, as decided by the faculty
- c. Final Assessment
 - i. PGD Project
 - ii. PGD Final Examination

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3. Grading System

- a. Students will receive alphabetical grades on their assignments which will be reflected on students' transcripts.
- b. Faculty will score PGD assignments numerically. Scores will be converted to the alphabetical grades provided to students.
- c. To pass an assignment, PGD students require a C grade (at least 60% marks).
- d. At the end of the program, PGD students are awarded a cumulative score (70% continuous assessment through the year + 30% final examination). Students need a cumulative score of at least 60% to pass the program.

See [Appendix 2.1 – Grades to Percentages Conversion Scale](#)

See [Appendix 2.2 – Process of Scoring](#)

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4. Retention Criteria

- a. PGD students are required to maintain an average of at least 60% marks in the **first four graded assignments** to continue in the program. Those unable to do so despite faculty assistance and counselling, may be dropped from the program.
- b. PGD students who maintain an average of 60% marks but have three failures in mandatory assignments – including, but not limited to presentations, Must Respond assignments, and the student blog – may be dropped from the program.
- c. Students are expected to be present during all days of every module. Per existing policy, absence for any reason may result in being dropped from the program.
 - i. Based on faculty discretion, students dropped due to unexpected illness including COVID, may be provided preference in admission to the following academic cycle of the program.

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5. Contact Sessions

Contact sessions take place during the four teaching modules. Students are evaluated during the sessions through various modalities including:

- a. Student presentations

- b. In-class tests and quizzes
- c. Class participation and attendance

See [Appendix 2.3 – Contact Sessions](#) for details of student evaluation

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6. Distance Learning Components

Must Respond Assignments

- a. PGD students receive mandatory Must Respond (MR) assignments as part of distance learning.
- b. In case of receiving less than 60% in the first MR only, PGD students will be debriefed by faculty in person and provided feedback. Following the debriefing, PGD students will rewrite the first failed MR.
- c. A rewritten MR that is judged by faculty to meet requirements is awarded only a ‘pass’ which is a C grade. Numerically, this is equivalent to 60% and no higher.
- d. An MR submitted before the deadline can be withdrawn by a PGD student with the faculty’s approval, as long as the amended version is resubmitted before the given deadline.
- e. In case of emergencies/unforeseen events, students must ask for an extension in the assignment deadline. Extensions will be given at the discretion of the faculty.
- f. Failure to send in assignments before the given deadline without prior permission from the faculty will result in zero marks for that assignment.
- g. All scores/grades on assignments awarded by the faculty will be final.

Student Blog

- a. A web based discussion blog (Student Blog) is created in every academic cycle.
- b. It is mandatory for PGD students to participate in the Student Blog as part of distance learning. Minimum requirements for each student are one post and two comments on the Blog each month.
- c. At the end of the month, PGD students will be awarded a pass/fail, based on their ability to meet minimum blog requirements
- d. Postings and comments that are not deemed to meet required standards by faculty will not be counted in the monthly tally.
- e. A student activity log will be emailed to all students at the beginning of the following month.

See [Appendix 2.4 - Distance Learning Components](#)

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7. Final Assessment

PGD Projects

- a. PGD students will prepare a bioethics related project during the PGD program.
- b. In the last module, PGD students will present a defense of the project to colleagues, faculty and external examiners.
- c. Based on feedback from examiners, students will be asked to revise and resubmit projects for review within a stipulated period, at the discretion of the faculty.

Final Examination

- a. PGD students will be required to sit for a written examination in the last module.
- b. Students will not be offered an opportunity to retake the final examination.

See [Appendix 2.5 – Final Assessment](#)

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Appendices

Appendix 1.1 – Sample Letter of Support

Date:

Dear -----,

This letter is written in support of ([applicant's name](#))'s application to the Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics program, to be conducted in ([year](#)).

As the ([writer's designation](#)), I confirm that ([institution](#)) fully supports ([applicant's name](#)) in acquiring this diploma and will ensure that he/she can attend all modules at the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Karachi and participate in distance learning activities.

Writer's signature

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Appendix 1.2 – Letter of Recommendation Requirements

Two letters of recommendation are to be emailed by the applicant’s referees directly and in confidence to the Chairperson of the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT.

The letters, preferably on a letterhead, should be from individuals in responsible positions who know the applicant.

A letter of recommendation should relate how long the referee has known the applicant and in what context (as a student, colleague, etc.) It should explain why the referee believes the applicant is suitable for pursuing formal education in bioethics. For example, the letter can mention particular skills, characteristics, qualities or qualifications that the referee believes make the applicant a good candidate for the program.

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Appendix 2.1 – Grades to Percentages Conversion Scale

- A+ (95 +)
- A (90 – 94)
- A– (85 – 89)
- B+ (80 – 84)
- B (75 – 79)
- B– (70 – 74)
- C+ (65 – 69)
- C (60 – 64)
- C– (55 – 59)
- D (40 – 54)
- E (25 – 39)
- F (Below 25)

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Appendix 2.2 – Process of Scoring

- In order to be awarded a diploma, the cumulative score must be at least 600 marks (or 60%) out of 1000.
- To arrive at the cumulative score, marks awarded for assignments and tests through the year will be added to get a total score for continuous assessment. This figure will be converted to equivalent marks out of 700.
- Students' overall score in the written final examination will be converted to equivalent marks out of 300.
- PGD students will receive a cumulative score out of 1000 marks, with continuous assessment counting towards 70% of the cumulative score, and the score from the written exam counting towards 30%.
- In case a student fails by a narrow margin to achieve 60% in the cumulative score, she may be given **up to** 5 grace marks. To maintain fairness, the same number of marks will be added to the cumulative score of all students.

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Appendix 2.3 – Contact Sessions

Student Evaluation during Modules:

PGD Presentations are an important tool for learning and student evaluation that are part of the first three academic modules. The objective of the presentations is to introduce and clarify ideas, concepts and issues that are relevant to bioethics discussions. The presentations give students the opportunity to teach bioethics, an experience they can draw upon when implementing their bioethics projects in the year following graduation. Presentation topics relate to the content of each module but focus on specific areas. During presentations students are assessed on their overall knowledge and understanding of assigned topics and related concepts, their identification of key ethical issues, and their ability to present a focused and coherent account of the subject.

Student performance in modules, including contribution to class activities and discussions, and level of preparedness as evidenced by knowledge of background readings, is evaluated by faculty.

Students may also be formally evaluated through **MCQs, quizzes, essay type questions, etc.** based on module content.

As and when required, students are debriefed about their participation in modules and their performance in tests and assignments.

Attendance in sessions is compulsory during all four modules.

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Appendix 2.4 - Distance Learning Components

Must Respond (MR) assignments are brief to medium-length responses to questions that encourage students to think analytically and foster their writing skills. MR questions may involve a written critique of relevant articles, images, video clips, etc. Student responses are graded on the relevance and strength of their arguments and the understanding they display of the issue in the context of their own culture and practices.

The Student Blog is an online forum on which students are required to contribute at least one post and two comments each month. The purpose of the Blog is to get students to identify and discuss ethical dilemmas in diverse areas, such as healthcare, scientific and technological advancement, society, culture, etc. Students are required to initiate discussions by posting on an issue and taking a position supported by valid arguments. Other students join in the discussion by commenting on the post and providing counterarguments. Sources for ethical dilemmas can vary from academic articles, news reports and social media to personal experiences. The Student Blog is moderated by the faculty.

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Appendix 2.5 – Final Assessment

The PGD Project is developed by students during the course of the program. It is run in the year following the PGD and involves students putting into practice what they have learnt by introducing bioethics to students and faculty, or conducting sessions related to research ethics and ERCs, etc. (to see titles of projects developed by PGD alumni, visit www.siut.org/bioethics/projects.html). To facilitate the preparation of the project, students are assigned supervisors from among CBEC faculty. Mostly, projects are implemented in the student's parent institution.

The Final Examination focuses on critical thinking, analysis and the review and application of important concepts taught during the year. Based on written papers, it uses different modalities including long and short essay responses, MCQs, etc. to test students on their understanding of bioethics concepts. It also evaluates students' ability to analyze given case scenarios and take positions supported by ethical arguments – skills that they have developed through the yearlong assessment.

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Continuous Assessment: Addendum, July 16, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a shift in CBEC's academic calendar as on-site teaching sessions have not been possible since March 2020. The Centre has restarted formal teaching online from July 1, 2020 and it is likely that these sessions may need to continue to be held virtually until on-campus modules can be resumed. This shift from CBEC's hybrid program of distance learning and on-site modules to purely virtual teaching requires the use of additional modalities for evaluating students' progress.

In view of this, Clause 4.b of the 'Retention Criteria' policy for PGD students - that PGD students who have three failures in mandatory assignments may be dropped from the program - will be temporarily suspended. This will apply to all graded assessments, including Must Respond assignments, class presentations and new assessment modalities such as quizzes and online sessions related assignments. However, PGD students will continue to be required to maintain an average of 60% marks in their assignments to stay in the program.

(See [Retention Criteria](#))

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Addendum: COVID Policies, Academic Year 2023

In addition to existing CBEC policies and regulations related to the academic programs, additional COVID related regulations will come into effect for the next academic cycle beginning in January 2023.

Applicants must review all the information provided on the CBEC website related to the academic programs. Any clarifications required can be directed to the Administrative Coordinator at cbec.siut@gmail.com

COVID Related Regulations

1. All applicants will be required to submit proof of vaccination against COVID in addition to having received a booster dose, as per current Pakistan government regulations.
 - a. Unvaccinated applicants must provide valid evidence of a medical contraindication, duly certified by an ID physician. The Admission and Selection Committee will assess for acceptability or otherwise.
2. Pakistan government SOPs in place at the time will be applicable during the module, including use of masks and social distancing.
 - a. Students will be expected to abide by any additional precautions faculty considers necessary during the module.
3. Students are expected to be present during all days of every module. Per existing policy, absence for any reason may result in being dropped from the program.
 - a. Based on faculty discretion, students dropped due to unexpected illness including COVID, may be provided preference in admission to the following academic cycle of the program.

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