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ETHICS Project Newsletter – 2025 Project Overview

The “Responsible Conduct of Research – Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS)” project, funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ CBHE Programme, is a pioneering national structural reform initiative in Georgia. Coordinated by Ilia State University, the project brings together 10 Georgian universities, 4 European partners, and 3 national stakeholders to enhance research ethics and integrity across the country's higher education landscape. The project commenced on February 01, 2023, and is set to conclude on January 31st, 2027.

The ETHICS Project Objectives:

Policy and Standard Change in Accreditation of Doctoral Programs/Capacity
Building of Accreditation Experts/Development of a MOOC

Research Integrity Module

Training of Researchers and Research Support Officers

University Research Integrity Policies, Ethics, and Resources

Research Integrity, Ethics & Governance Committee/Board

Academic Support and Research Integrity Services for Supportive
Environment for Researchers/Doctoral Students

Responsible Science Communication Strategy

Project Coordinator:

Ilia State University

EU partners

1. Free University Amsterdam/ STICHTING VU
2. Charles University Prague
3. Masaryk University
4. European Network for Academic Integrity

Project Georgian HEIs:

1. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
2. Caucasus University
3. David Tvildiani Medical University
4. Shota Rustaveli State University
5. Akaki Tsereteli State University
6. Samtskhe-Javakheti State University
7. Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University
8. GIPA- Georgian Institute of Public Affairs
9. Apollon Kutateladze Tbilisi State Academy of Art

Project Non – University Partners:

1. Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia
2. National Center For Educational Quality Enhancement
3. Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia

Highlight events and Key Activities within the first half of the project

Developing and Institutionalizing a Research Ethics and Integrity Module in Georgian Higher Education

Course navigation: Courses / First Faculty of Medicine / Addictology / ETHICS: Research Ethics and Integrity / Introducing a Research Ethics and Integrity

Introducing a Research Ethics and Integrity

General

- Objectives: Research Ethics and Integrity
- On Being a Scientist
- Research Ethics and Integrity Defined
- Video: What is Research Integrity?

Course items in sidebar:

- Congratulations
- Introducing a Research Ethics...
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- Do the Task: The European Cod...
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- Explore: Science Europe website

The development of the Research Ethics and Research Integrity Module has been one of the flagship achievements of the ETHICS project and represents a major step forward for Georgian higher education. Developed in close collaboration with European partners, particularly Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Charles University in Prague, the module was designed to fill a systemic gap, as no comprehensive, structured training in research integrity had previously existed within Georgian universities. Grounded in European frameworks and aligned with the principles of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the module was tailored to the needs of PhD students and early-career researchers while remaining adaptable to broader academic audiences. Following its translation into Georgian, both the English and Georgian versions were piloted across all participating HEIs during the 2024–2025 academic year. A unified evaluation methodology, including a jointly designed survey instrument, ensured consistent data collection and evidence-based refinement of the content, structure, and duration of the training.

The content of the module is structured to provide both a conceptual foundation and practical guidance on responsible research conduct. It covers core topics such as principles of research integrity; the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity; authorship and publication ethics; plagiarism and text recycling; responsible use of AI in research; research data management; conflicts of interest; supervision and mentoring responsibilities in doctoral education; and the functioning of Research Ethics Committees. In addition to theoretical input, the module incorporates case studies and scenario-based discussions.

To date, more than 200 doctoral candidates, early-career researchers, and academic staff members have successfully completed the training, marking a significant milestone in building national capacity in research ethics and integrity. The importance of this achievement extends beyond the number of participants: the module has contributed to shaping a shared understanding of responsible research conduct, supervision standards, authorship practices, data management, and ethical decision-making. By embedding these principles early in researchers' careers, the project supports the development of a sustainable culture of integrity that reduces the risks of misconduct, strengthens research quality, and enhances international credibility. As of the 2025–2026 academic year, the module has been formally integrated into institutional curricula as a mandatory training component, ensuring its continuity and long-term impact. In this way, the initiative not only provides immediate educational benefits but also contributes to systemic change by aligning doctoral education in Georgia with European standards and expectations.

National Workshop within the Framework of the International Project on Research Ethics and Integrity



A national workshop was held in Telavi on 23-24 June 2025 as part of the EU-funded project "Responsible Conduct of Research – Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS)", which was co-organized by Ilia State University and Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University. The two-day event aimed to encourage knowledge sharing and strengthen collaboration between the participating Georgian universities. Representatives from the universities discussed research ethics policy documents, the process of establishing research ethics committees, and plans for developing academic support and research integrity services. As a result of the workshop, the participating universities developed draft action plans and emphasized the importance of introducing new and improved services in the field of research ethics and integrity.

Redefining Institutional Research Integrity Policies and Research Ethics Committees within the ETHICS Project



Despite the fact that research integrity issues were underlined in the codes of ethics and conduct of each ETHICS consortium member at the national level, the institutional policy for Research Ethics and Integrity has been redefined through the ETHICS project under WG5 – Research Integrity, Ethics & Governance Committee/Board, led by the Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia and chaired by the EU partner Masaryk University. WG5, which has overarching institutional responsibility for research integrity, provided policy direction and a mandate for conducting ethical reviews of research, as well as measures to investigate allegations of misconduct. The policy documentation presented at each university now reflects the principles of The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and, at the operational level, presents the respective model of development. The year 2025 was essential for ETHICS consortium member universities in terms of establishing or revising the structure and architecture of existing Research Ethics Committees. In most cases, universities established new permanent Research Ethics Committees instead of the previous ad hoc ones. During 2025, a number of universities also presented evidence of applying to the Research Ethics Committee in order to determine the compatibility of their research projects with ethical and integrity standards.

The Third International Meeting of the ETHICS Project Consortium at Masaryk University



On September 3–4, 2025, within the framework of the EU-funded project “Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities”, the third international consortium management meeting was held, hosted by Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic). Tomáš Foltýnek (Masaryk University, Project Manager) and Ketevan Darakhvelidze (Chancellor of Ilia State University, Project Manager) officially opened the event. During the meeting, they discussed the project’s ongoing progress, the work of the working groups and future activities. Partners presented reports on several key topics, including: the accreditation process of doctoral programs and the training of experts; piloting the research integrity and ethics module; training ethics officers at universities and strengthening their role; the work of research ethics committees and policy document development; and the introduction of research integrity and ethics support services and recommendations from the partners.

Training Sessions of the International Research Ethics Project Consortium on Developing a Science Communication Strategy



On January 15-16, Caucasus University hosted a two-day workshop within the framework of the European Commission-funded project – Responsible Conduct of Research – Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities (ETHICS). The meeting focused on the development of a science communication strategy and was co-organized by Ilia State University and Caucasus University.

The aim of the meeting was to establish a unified science communication strategy, develop an action plan, and share best practices from European partners. Participants included representatives of Georgian and international partner organizations involved in the project, among them researchers, managers, research integrity officers, doctoral candidates, early-career researchers, and the project’s external evaluator. The working sessions were conducted in a group-work format and addressed practical aspects of disseminating project results. Participants discussed ways of communicating information to various target audiences, including the preparation of press releases, engagement with the media, and communication with the wider public. On the second day, the work continued in a “World Café” format, during which key messages tailored to specific audiences and appropriate dissemination formats were identified. The discussions also covered linking the project outcomes with other research initiatives and developing long-term communication approaches.

In the concluding session, participants summarized the experience gained and reviewed the science communication action plan, which aims to promote the project’s results to a broader audience and strengthen trust in research integrity and ethics.

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