

Ethical Guidelines for HCAIM Theses

Plagiarism, Data Fabrication and Image Manipulation

Plagiarism is not acceptable. Plagiarism includes copying text, ideas, images, or data from another source, including your own publications, without giving credit to the original source.

Reuse of text that is copied from another source must be between quotation marks and the original source must be cited. If a study's design or the manuscript's structure or language has been inspired by previous studies, these studies must be explicitly cited.

Image files must not be manipulated or adjusted in any way that could lead to misinterpretation of the information provided by the original image. Irregular manipulation includes 1) introduction, enhancement, moving, or removing features from the original image, 2) grouping of images that should obviously be presented separately or 3) modifying the contrast, brightness or colour balance to obscure, eliminate or enhance some information.

Results presented must not be inappropriately selected, manipulated, enhanced, or fabricated. This includes 1) exclusion of data points to enhance significance of conclusions, 2) fabrication of data, 3) selection of results that support a particular conclusion at the expense of contradictory data, 4) deliberate selection of analysis tools or methods to support a particular conclusion (including p-hacking).

Research Involving Human Subjects, Animals or Plants

When reporting on research that involves human subjects, human material, human tissues, or human data, the proposing party must ensure that the investigations were carried out following the rules of the Declaration of Helsinki of 1975 (<https://www.wma.net/what-we-do/medical-ethics/declaration-of-helsinki/>), revised in 2013. Any consequence associated with the violation of this aspect will totally be imputed to the proposing party and neither on the HCAIM consortium nor the student.

Theses working with cell lines should state the origin of any cell lines. For established cell lines, the provenance should be stated and references must also be given to either a published paper or to a commercial source. If previously unpublished *de novo* cell lines were used, including those gifted from another laboratory, details of institutional review board or ethics committee approval must be given, and confirmation of written informed consent must be provided if the line is of human origin.

All the topics potentially derived from any research causing any harm to animals are forbidden. All the guidelines applied to humans should be followed (where possible) for animals too.

Experimental research on plants (either cultivated or wild) including collection of plant material, must comply with institutional, national, or international guidelines. We recommend that the theses comply with the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and the [Convention on the Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#).

Sex, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion and other bias in Research

It is encouraged to follow the '[Sex and Gender Equity in Research – SAGER – guidelines](#)' and to include sex and gender considerations where relevant. The terms sex (biological attribute) and gender (shaped by social and cultural circumstances) should be used carefully in order to avoid confusing both terms. The thesis should also describe (in the 'background'), whether sex and/or gender differences may be expected; report how sex and/or gender were accounted for in the design of the study; provide disaggregated data by sex and/or gender, where appropriate; and discuss respective results. If a sex and/or gender analysis was not conducted, the rationale should be given in the Discussion.

Similar considerations apply to all the other forms of bias, including (and not limited to) ethnicity and religion. For the former, we remind that humans do not have races, but only ethnicity.

If the thesis is focused on bias, the rationale behind it must be clarified from the beginning.

Conflict of Interests

Students must avoid entering into agreements with study sponsors, both for-profit and non-profit, that interfere with access to all of the study's data or that interfere with their ability to analyse and interpret the data and to prepare the thesis independently when and where they choose.

Students must identify and declare any personal circumstances or interest that may be perceived as inappropriately influencing the representation or interpretation of the reported research results. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include but are not limited to financial interests (such as membership, employment, consultancies, stocks/shares ownership, honoraria, grants or other funding, paid expert testimonies and patent-licensing arrangements) and non-financial interests (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, personal beliefs).

Any role of the funding sponsors in the design of the study, in the collection, analyses or interpretation of data, in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results must be declared in advance.

Citation Policies

Students should ensure that where material is taken from other sources (including their own published writing), the source is clearly cited and that where appropriate permission is obtained.

Students should not engage in excessive self-citation of their own work.

Students should not copy references from other publications if they have not read the cited work.

Students should not preferentially cite their own or their friends', peers', or institution's publications.

Students should not cite advertisements or advertorial material.

Ethical Guidelines for Reviewers

Potential Conflict of Interests

Reviewers are asked to inform the HCAIM board if they hold a conflict of interests that may prejudice the review report, either in a positive or negative way. The board will check as accurately as possible before inviting reviewers; nevertheless, the cooperation of reviewers in this matter is expected and appreciated.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Reviewers must keep the content of the thesis, including the abstract, confidential. They must inform the HCAIM board if they would like a colleague to complete the review on their behalf.