

Implementation of the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) and Internal Research Policy for the Enhancement of Quality Research Standards at CISS AJK



Center for International Strategic Studies AJK

This SOP consists of 05 pages and has been prepared in accordance with comprehensive guidelines tailored to the enhancement of quality standards in research, in line with the mission and objectives of CISS AJK. The document is prepared under the supervision of Executive Director Asma Shakir Khawaja, with the input of Research Officers, Associate Research Officers and rigorously analyzing the HEC policy. It will remain enforced until amended, canceled, or suspended, subject to periodic review as necessary to ensure adherence to institutional objectives and ethical standards.

Standard Operating Procedure

Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) AJK

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Record of Approvals/Revisions

This SOP will undergo regular updates, with revisions being approved by the Executive Director and senior members of the Research Validation Committee at CISS AJK. The document will be reviewed and amended as per the requirements of national and international research standards.

Aim

This SOP aims to streamline and improve the quality of policy research and thought leadership at CISS AJK in light of globally recognized best practices. The goal is to enhance the relevance and impact of research in key areas such as security, defense, and strategic studies, thereby informing national and international policy-making.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Quality improvement at CISS AJK involves the constant review and upgrading of research methodologies, publication standards, and ethical guidelines to maintain the highest level of credibility and influence in the policy domain. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) ensures that CISS AJK remains a leading voice in strategic studies, particularly with regard to South Asia.

Research Evaluation Criteria for Research Officers and Associate Research Officers

Research Officers and Associate Research Officers at CISS AJK are required to publish research papers, policy briefs, and reports that align with the objectives of the institution.

- Their Evaluation will be based on the quality, relevance, and impact of the research, focusing on:
- Contribution to national and regional security debates.
- Publication in credible policy journals recognized both nationally and internationally.
- The impact of research on policy-making and thought leadership. Collaboration with other think tanks and institutions globally.

Quality of Publications and Avoidance of Cloned Journals

At CISS AJK, all research outputs must meet the highest ethical standards. Special care must be taken to avoid publishing in cloned or dubious journals. Any publication in journals found to be cloned or have compromised editorial standards will be rejected, and the researcher may face disciplinary action.

Additionally, all publications must be in recognized journals that uphold strict peer-review processes. CISS AJK's Research Validation Committee will periodically issue advisories on journals considered questionable, and research officers must comply with these guidelines.

Responsibility Mechanism

Responsibility	Action By
Guide and mentor research officers to publish in high-quality, recognized journals.	Executive Director Asma Shakir Khawaja
Ensure that research meets ethical standards and is relevant to CISS AJK's mission.	Research Validation Committee

Evaluate the quality of research and ensure no publications in cloned or dubious journals.	Respective Research Officer
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The Executive Director will have the final say in decisions related to research quality and policy alignment. Research Officers are encouraged to seek guidance from senior members and comply with CISS AJK’s high standards.

Implementation and Review

- This SOP will be implemented with immediate effect after its circulation. The first review will be conducted one year after implementation to ensure alignment with CISS AJK’s evolving goals and external policy environments.
- Publications at CISS AJK must adhere to strict guidelines to ensure relevance, quality, and impact in line with the institution’s mission. To maintain high standards, the following criteria will apply:
- Only publications in the relevant field will be considered for any kind of research benefits at CISS AJK. The relevancy of publications will be checked by the Executive Director before submission for further evaluation or research benefits.
- Multi-authored publications in HEC-recognized journals, with a maximum of three authors (including the principal author), will be considered for research benefits at CISS AJK. Any publications exceeding this limit will require additional justification and approval from the Research Validation Committee.

Ethical Standards and Mission Relevance

- CISS AJK upholds a high standard of ethics and relevance in its research activities. Publications or research that do not meet the following standards will not be considered for promotion, hiring, or other institutional benefits:
- **Ethical Standards:** All research conducted under the auspices of CISS AJK must adhere to national and international ethical guidelines. Plagiarism, data manipulation, or any form of academic misconduct will be subject to disciplinary action. Any research found to be published in cloned, dubious, or predatory journals will be disqualified, and the researcher may face penalties, including induction, disqualification from promotion, and further renewal of the contract.
- **Relevance to CISS AJK’s Mission:** Research must align with CISS AJK’s mission, which focuses on security, strategic studies, defense, and policy-making relevant to South Asia and global security environments.
- Publications that are not directly relevant to the core focus areas of CISS AJK will not be considered for promotions or hiring decisions, as the institution prioritizes impactful, mission-driven research.

- This ensures that the resources and reputation of CISS AJK are utilized for advancing key strategic issues.
- The responsibilities of various members of CISS AJK, including the Research Officers, Associate Research Officers, and the Executive Director, are integral to maintaining these standards. Each member is expected to contribute to the quality and ethical integrity of the institution's research output.
- The Executive Director, Asma Shakir Khawaja, holds the final authority on decisions regarding research publications and their alignment with the strategic goals of the institution.