

Admissions & Evaluation Policies

Master in Bioethics

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC)

Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT)

Sindh Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS)

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

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Section 1 – Admissions Policy and Procedures for Master in Bioethics

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 two year Master in Bioethics (MBE) is to provide professionals from relevant disciplines a strong foundation in the multidisciplinary field of bioethics, within a developing world context. The MBE aims to produce academic leaders by giving students the opportunity to do bioethics related research and writing, enabling them to enhance relevant aspects of bioethics within their field and workplace.

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3. Admissions Criteria

- a. The MBE is open to Pakistani and foreign applicants holding at least a graduate (equivalent to Bachelor of Arts/Science, etc.) degree and working within primary fields such as healthcare, social sciences, philosophy, law, education, etc.
- b. Applicants have to be proficient in English reading, writing and comprehension in order to handle coursework and thesis 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 (equivalent to Bachelor's degree) and postgraduate degree(s) (if applicable)

- iv. Letter of support from relevant institutional head (only for applicants working full-time)
- v. Essay on a given topic
- vi. Two samples of written material such as reports, articles, etc., preferably academic publications
- vii. Two letters of recommendation emailed in confidence by applicant's referees directly to the Chairperson of CBEC
- viii. Scanned copy of passport sized photograph
- d. If selected, applicants will be required to submit hard copies of attested qualifications/degrees and two passport sized photographs.
- b. 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. Conversion to PGD Track

Some applicants may be considered by the Admission and Selection Committee to be more suitable for the Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD) track than for the MBE program. The electronic application form will contain an option for applicants to indicate their willingness to be considered for diverting their application towards the PGD program. An offer to shift to the PGD track does not imply an automatic selection in the PGD program.

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6. Concurrent Enrolment

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

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7. Admissions Procedure

- a. CBEC has a merit based admissions policy with no discrimination on the basis of gender, age, religion or ethnicity.

- b. Short listed applicants are required to sit for an English writing and comprehension examination.
- c. Following a review of examination results, a final list will be prepared of applicants who will be 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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8. 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 Master in Bioethics

The Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC) offers an intensive two year Master in Bioethics (MBE) degree. The first year of the MBE program is the ‘coursework’ year. In this year, students attend four modules taught in CBEC interspaced with assignments in the intervening months. The second year of the program is devoted to the completion and submission of a research based thesis. The following policy sets down details pertaining to the different modes employed for evaluating students through the two year program.

1) Criteria for Receiving Degree

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

- a. Maintaining an average of at least 65% marks throughout the program
- b. Successfully completing mandatory written assignments through the first year
- c. Successfully completing the MBE thesis in the second year

Award of Certificates/Diploma in lieu of Degree

At the discretion of the faculty, MBE students who are dropped from the program may be offered either a Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD) or certificates for Research Ethics and/or Clinical Ethics modules they have successfully completed. The faculty’s decision in this case will be final.

Students can also be provided a letter listing courses taken by the student and grades awarded.

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2) Modes of Evaluation

The Masters in Bioethics Program will employ the following modes of student evaluation through the two year program:

- a. Contact Sessions
 - i. Assigned teaching sessions in modules
 - ii. MBE Seminars
 - iii. Other modalities, such as MCQs, quizzes etc.
- b. Coursework
 - i. Take home assignments related to courses
 - ii. Book reviews

- i. Other coursework, as decided by the faculty
- b. MBE thesis

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3) Grading System

- a. Students will receive alphabetical grades on their assignments which will reflect on their transcripts.
- b. Faculty will score MBE assignments numerically. Scores will be converted to the alphabetical grades provided to students.
- c. To pass an assignment, MBE students require a C plus grade (at least 65 % marks).

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

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4) Retention Criteria

- a. MBE students are required to maintain an average of at least 65% 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. MBE students who maintain an average of 65% through their coursework year but have 3 failures in graded activities 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 may be provided preference in admission to the following academic cycle of the program.

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5) Contact Sessions

Teaching Sessions

- a. MBE students will be required to take teaching sessions with PGD students for which they will be graded.

MBE Seminars

- b. Seminars are conducted during modules exclusively for MBE students.
- c. Students whose performance in seminars is not satisfactory are debriefed on their participation and understanding of topics discussed.

(See [Appendix 2.2 – Contact Sessions](#) for details of student evaluation)

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6) Coursework

Written assignments

- a. MBE students receive mandatory written assignments pertaining to the material covered during the previous module.
- b. All scores/grades on assignments awarded by the faculty will be final.

Failed Assignments

- a. MBE students will be allowed to rewrite up to three failed assignments throughout the course year.
- b. Rewritten assignments that are judged by course faculty to meet requirements will be awarded a C plus grade and will appear on students' transcripts as 'resubmitted'. Numerically, this is equivalent to 65% marks and no higher.
- c. 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.
- d. Failure to send in assignments before the given deadline without prior permission from the faculty will result in zero marks for that assignment.

(See [Appendix 2.3 – Coursework](#) for details of assignments)

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7) MBE Thesis

- a. MBE students will be provided one or more faculty thesis supervisors.
- b. Final MBE theses will be reviewed by an external Thesis Review Committee (TRC) constituted from national and international scholars and professionals from relevant fields.
- c. The TRC will designate students theses as either 'pass', 'requires modification and resubmission', or 'fail'.
- d. MBE students must receive a 'pass' grade from all reviewers for their theses in order to be awarded the MBE degree.

- e. Students who are unable to submit their final theses by the deadline due to unforeseen circumstances may be given an extension of up to three months at the discretion of the faculty.
- f. Students whose theses require modifications may be given an extension of up to three months to resubmit an amended version.
- g. In extraordinary circumstances if a student is unable to modify and resubmit the thesis within the stipulated extension time (see point ‘f’ above), she/he may be provided leave for up to a period of 2 years (one academic cycle) to do so at her/his own pace. This offer will be at the discretion of faculty and will require the following:
 - i. The student must provide evidence of extenuating circumstances beyond her/his control requiring the extended time for modification and submission of the thesis.
 - ii. The student will have completed all coursework and assignments satisfactorily and maintained an exceptional academic record.
 - iii. The student will be marked as ‘On Leave’ for this period in the records of CBEC and the Sindh Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS).
- h. In case of obtaining a fail grade on the final thesis, a student will have the right to appeal this decision to the CBEC Chairperson for reassessment. The Chairperson will form an independent committee for this purpose to advise her/him on this matter.
- i. The decision of the CBEC Chairperson will be final.

(See [Appendix 2.4 - MBE Thesis](#))

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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 Master in Bioethics program, to be conducted in (years).

As the (writer's designation), I confirm that (institution) fully supports (applicant's name) in acquiring this degree and will facilitate him/her in attending all modules at the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Karachi and completing coursework and thesis requirements.

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 – Contact Sessions

MBE Seminars

In each module, seminars are conducted exclusively for MBE students. The objective of the seminars is to provide students the opportunity to interact directly with course faculty and explore given topics in depth. Reading material is provided well ahead of time and students are required to not only go through the provided material but also do lateral reading. Students are required to do in depth study of relevant topics and then critically analyze them.

Teaching Sessions

MBE students are assigned topics to teach PGD students during modules. The faculty attends these sessions and critically evaluates the students' overall grasp of the topic, their ability to generate and direct relevant group discussion, ability to clarify concepts and their time management. MBE students are graded on their ability to present the key concepts relating to their topic, and engage the class in discussing associated ethical issues.

Other Modalities

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

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Appendix 2.3 – Coursework

MBE written assignments are full length papers, mostly related to courses taught during modules. These require students to write scholarly responses after research and background reading on the given topic. MBE assignments are graded on the relevance and strength of their arguments and the understanding they display of topics in the global context, as well as in the context of their own culture and practices. Students are expected to maintain high academic standards as evidenced by their ability to identify, analyze and critique important ideas and themes in scholarly literature on a given topic, and present them coherently in writing. Students may also get Humanities assignments that require them to understand ethical issues portrayed in literature, art or other media.

Book Reviews: MBE students are also required to read and review at least one book relevant to bioethics, during their coursework year. Books assigned may be fiction, or may be based on scholarly work. Students are expected to explore the themes of the book in depth and to critique the book through research on the subject.

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Appendix 2.4 - MBE Thesis

The MBE Thesis is a mandatory component of the MBE program. The groundwork for the thesis begins with drafting an outline of the proposed thesis for review by the supervising faculty and the CBEC chairperson. Where indicated, research proposals are submitted to SIUT's Central Research Committee where students are required to defend their proposals, prior to ethical review. Research involving human subjects only begins following approval from the SIUT ERC and the ERC where the research is being conducted.

MBE theses are based on original research on an ethics related topic. The expected length of the thesis is 15000 to 18000 words. The research conducted can involve either one or a combination of qualitative, empirical and quantitative methodologies. A comprehensive literature review and analysis of a suitable ethics related topic are also acceptable for the thesis. The choice of the thesis topic and the selected research methodology is often influenced by the student's own professional background and his/her field of interest. The final thesis is examined by a Thesis Review Committee composed of at least three external/internal examiners.

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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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