

## أهمية تبني القواعد الأخلاقية في المؤسسات التعليمية الليبية مع إشارة خاصة لأقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالدراسات العليا

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### مستخلص البحث

المؤسسات التعليمية، شأنها شأن أي منظمة أخرى، يجب أن تعتمد مدونات أخلاقية تحكم سلوك أعضائها وأدائهم . تكمن المشكلة في غياب هذه القواعد الأخلاقية في العديد من المؤسسات التعليمية الليبية مثل قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بالدراسات العليا. في الواقع ، يتحمل الباحثون والأساتذة والطلاب مسؤوليات تجاه بعضهم البعض و تجاه الآخرين في المجتمع.

في هذا البحث تم جمع البيانات عن طريق الاستبيانات للتحقق من مدى توفر و تطبيق هذه المدونات الأخلاقية ولمعرفة إلى أي مدى تتبع هذه الأقسام ممارسات ( البند 10) المتعلق بالشفافية والنزاهة الصادر عن دليل ضمان الجودة والاعتماد لمؤسسات التعليم العالي في ليبيا. وشارك في الاستبيان 20 أستاذا من المحاضرين في كل من الأكاديمية الليبية، وجامعة طرابلس، وجامعة الزاوية، وجامعة صبراتة، وجامعة بنغازي وجامعة غريان بأقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالدراسات العليا.

وأفاد المحاضرون بأنه لا توجد مدونات أخلاقية مكتوبة في الأقسام المعنية. كما أظهرت النتائج أن هذه الأقسام لا تستقصي آراء الطلاب فيما يخص أداء المحاضرين ولا في علاقتهم مع الطلاب. وأشارت النتائج أيضا إلى أن معظم المشاركين في الاستبيان يرون أن هذه الأقسام لاتأخذ في الاعتبار أخلاقيات العمل البحثي وتتفق هذه النتيجة مع عدم وجود مدونات أخلاقية مكتوبة في الأقسام المعنية، حيث يعتمد المحاضرون على أخلاقهم وقيمهم ومبادئهم الشخصية عند ممارستهم لمهامهم. عليه يؤكد البحث على لفت انتباه صانعي القرار والباحثين والأساتذة والطلاب إلى أهمية اعتماد مدونات أخلاقية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالدراسات العليا.

***The Importance of Adopting Ethical Codes in the Libyan Educational Institutions - with Special Reference to the Postgraduate English Departments***

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**Abstract**

*Educational institutions, like any other organization, should adopt ethical codes that govern their members' behaviors and performances. The problem lies in the absence of these ethical codes in many Libyan Educational Institutions such as EFL Post Departments. In fact, researchers, teachers and students have responsibilities towards each other and towards other people in the society.*

*In this research, a questionnaire is used to collect data about the availability and application of these codes. It is also used to find out to what extent do these Departments follow the practices of (Item 10), Transparency and Integrity, which was issued by The Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya. 20 lecturers at higher EFL Libyan institutions including the Libyan Academy, Tripoli University, Zawia University, Sabratha University, Benghazi University and Gharyan University participated in the questionnaire.*

*The results revealed that the majority of the lecturers believe that the post English departments have no written ethical charters. Moreover, the results revealed that that the Post English Departments do not explore either the students' views on the performance of the teaching staff nor their views on the teaching staff relationship with the students. Furthermore, the results indicated that the majority of the lecturers believe that the Post English Departments do not take into account the ethics of scientific research. Therefore, the research emphasizes on drawing the attention of the decision-makers, researchers, teachers, and students to the importance of adopting ethical codes.*

**Key words:** *Ethical codes – Ethical principles - Transparency – Integrity – Confidentiality*

### **Introduction**

In the sixties, there was enormous growth in social and educational sciences. University enrolments expanded and the number of these disciplines' practitioners grew correspondingly. At that time, there were few rules governing research work. In that era, "several studies conducted (and) raised key ethical issues for social scientists. By the nineties, many professional associations, all universities, colleges, hospitals, and most government agencies had in place codes of ethics to guide social researchers" (Jackson, 1995, p. 285). In recent decades, there has been increased awareness of ethical issues in all disciplines. As Sullivan, 2009, p. 1, asserts, "Codes of ethics for professionals in numerous disciplines have taken on significance in recent years".

According to (Nather, 2016, p. 24), "One must always bear in mind ethical considerations when designing a research project. This is true for all types of research". One of the major concerns that a researcher needs to address before designing a study is ethics. "Social research has an ethical-moral dimension, although, different approaches to science address the values issue differently. All approaches recognize the ethical dimension to research." (Neuman., 2014. P.145)

### **The significance and the hypothesis of the research**

This paper examines ethical issues such as integrity, honesty, transparency, respect for others, accountability, fairness, equity, justice, anonymity, and confidentiality. It hypothesizes that these ethical codes are not adopted by many Libyan EFL Post Educational Institutions. The paper argues that adopting and respecting these ethical issues, in our Libyan EFL Post Educational Institutions, ensures that all our activities such as teaching, researching and translating will meet ethical requirements.

Underscoring and emphasizing ethical issues undoubtedly will enhance the teaching, learning and researching processes. This research may benefit decision makers, researchers, teachers and students and draw their attention to the importance of adopting these ethical codes in these institutions.

## **Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions**

In this regard, it is worth referring to the Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya p. 21 (translated by the researcher from Arabic) regarding (The Ethical Charter of Educational Institutions) which must be adhered to in order to obtain accreditation for any higher educational institution in Libya. **See Appendix 1**

### **Item 10: Transparency and Integrity**

**This item has one section:**

- **Transparency and integrity**

The Educational Institution must provide ethical charters to all its employees, such as members of the teaching staff, supporting cadre, and employees, which provide for their duties, rights and ethical practices in the implementation of their duties. The institution must also be transparent and impartial in disseminating the correct information about all its activities.

#### **The most important good practices in this item:**

- The existence of a general ethical charter and ethical charters for all professions and specialties conducted by the institution.
- The institution must be impartial in disseminating information and data regarding its vision, mission and objectives.
- The institution must apply a firm and clear system of reward and punishment.
- The institution must ensure transparency and full fairness in the administrative and financial transactions of all its members.
- The institution must take into account the ethics of scientific research, the prescribed controls and the relevant local and international standards.
- The institution must guarantee the academic freedom of teaching staff, and enable them to express their opinions in accordance with the job description and customs applicable in educational institutions.
- The institution should explore students' views on the performance of the teaching staff and their relationship with students.

### **Studies conducted about the importance of adapting ethical codes in the context of EFL Teaching and Education**

Alimorad (2014:11) conducted a study to investigate the ethical conflicts experienced by 49 Iranian EFL teachers in the classroom context and reported conflicts between students' needs and basic values, imposed authority demands and teachers' needs, imposed authority demands and basic values, institutional requirements and student needs, parents needs and basic values, institutional requirements and basic values, student needs and teacher needs, parents' needs and teacher needs, collegial support and basic values and institutional requirements and parent's needs.

Fallahi et al (2019:95) believed that professional ethics is more important for faculty members than other professions. This is because faculty members have an influential role not only in their educational institutions but also in their communities and environments.

Saleh (2020) conducted a study investigates 58 Libyan EFL university instructors' awareness and commitment to these standards. The data was collected through an online close-ended questionnaire. The results indicate that Libyan universities have no written ethical codes of teaching practice and do not account for the instructor's commitment to these codes. Nonetheless, the participants practiced some professional ethical behaviors according to their personal morals, values, and principles.

### **Definitions of Ethics**

Ethics can be defined as a " system or code of conduct" (Silva, 1997: 359). In education, ethics involves "systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct" (Singh et al ,2005). Ethics, as (Biggam, 2011, P.249) indicates "is essentially a code of conduct on how we ought to lead our lives: sometimes it can appear in written form – as reflected in the laws of the land – but it can also be present in our unwritten philosophical and social beliefs that manifest themselves in everyday behaviour. Ethics is not a science, i.e. it is not absolute – people can, and often do, disagree on what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct". Whereas, (Blyth, 2015, p.166) perceives, ethics as "rather potent academic concept, because of the powerful human rights connotations attached to it".

### **Criteria for assessing ethical acceptability**

To establish criteria for assessing ethical acceptability (Jackson, 1995, pp. 296-306) refers to two approaches: *consequentialist* and *deontological*, the first view is that ethical judgments about a research project should be made in the light of its consequences for the subject (participant), for the academic discipline, and for the society. A cost-benefit analysis might reveal that the advantages gained by the advancement of our knowledge justify the violation of some rules: in this view, deception is tolerable if it does not do any long-term damage to the subject (participant).

The *deontological* view for research ethics, on the other hand, proposes absolute moral strictures that must never be violated. According to this view, maintaining the *comfort and self-esteem* of the subject (participant) should be the central concern of the researcher. Moreover, *respondents should feel free to refuse participation*, withdraw at any time, or to refuse to answer any particular question. This view also implies that the respondent has a right to know how he or she was selected for the participation in a study. Furthermore, researchers should not use hidden codes to assist in the identification of those who have or have not returned questionnaires. In dealing with competent adults, participation should be based on *informed consent*- i.e. the potential respondents must be informed about the nature of the study, what kind of issues will be explored, how the respondents were selected, and who is sponsoring the research. Where studies are done involving children, the infirm or incompetent adults, the organization or individual responsible for the prospective respondents should provide consent in writing.

### **Bias**

Bias is defined as “a preference or predisposition to favour a particular conclusion” (Jackson, 1995). In fact, one of the main ethical values is to be aware of bias and to avoid it. As Ang and Nather, 2016, p 253 indicate, one of the questions that should be asked when critically evaluating a research article is, “Does the writer possess any bias?”

It is noticeable that some researchers while writing the literature review chapter that they select arguments that defend their point of view and neglect other arguments that refute their hypothesis. As Ang and Nather, 2016 p. 247, warn “ a sound review article is characterized by a thorough and disciplined

literature search. It is important to take into account all relevant studies, to provide a holistic view and weed out bias. It is important that the interviewer avoid asking leading questions (i.e., questions that bias the interviewee's responses) so that the interviewee can give his or her candid responses without influence from the interviewer. (Tomal, 2003, p.37.)

In terms of reducing bias, Ang and Nather, 2016 p. 247. indicate that unlike the unstated methodology of narrative reviews, "systematic reviews aim to minimize bias by using explicit and pre-selected criteria to obtain objective information." Likewise, Carspecken cited in Haralambos, 2000, p. 985, believes that critical research need not be biased "because the researchers engaging in it have value commitments. Critical researchers should not just look for the facts which fit their theories. ... they should be open to finding evidence which contradicts their theories and challenges their values. They should always be open to changing their standpoints in the light of what they find during the course of the research".

### **Ethical principles**

Codes of ethics and other researchers provide guidance, but ethical conduct ultimately depends on an individual researcher. Researchers have a moral and professional obligation to be ethical even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics. Indeed, many participants are little concerned about protecting their privacy and other rights. (Neuman., 2014. P.145)

Hamilton and Smith, 2016, present the following list of ethical principles:

1. *integrity;*
2. *honesty;*
3. *truth;*
4. *transparency;*
5. *respect for others;*
6. *trust;*
7. *accountability;*
8. *fairness;*
9. *equity, justice and social justice;*
10. *democratic and ethical governance and management of the education*
11. *quality education;*
12. *personal and systems improvement;*

13. *institutional autonomy/institutional independence;*
14. *international co-operation.*

They also identify the following eight groups of actors in education:

1. *teachers in schools;*
2. *academic staff in higher education (HE);*
3. *school pupils;*
4. *HE students;*
5. *parents/guardians/care givers/carers of school pupils;*
6. *parents/guardians/care givers/carers of HE students;*
7. *employers and managers within the education system;*
8. *relevant public officials, and the political leaders and representatives of broader civil society more generally.*

According to Duska, 1998, p.xi, “Knowing the proper ethical principles and applying them to specific situations is not all that is required to be ethical. One must have the character strength or virtue to be able to operate at an ethical level on a day-to-day basis.”

### **Integrity**

Hamilton and Smith, 2016 recommend that all actors in education should ensure the “integrity” of their behaviour, as they illustrate, “their behaviour is consistent with a set of positive moral and ethical principles and standards, based on core values.” They add that “Integrity will provide the connection between positive ethical principles and quality in education, and create a barrier to corruption”. (P.38)

### **Transparency**

According to Transparency International organization 2019, Transparency:

“is about shedding light on rules, plans, processes and actions. It is knowing why, how, what, and how much. Transparency ensures that public officials, civil servants, managers, board members and businesspeople act visibly and understandably, and report on their activities. And it means that the general public can hold them to account. It is the surest way of guarding against corruption, and helps increase trust in the people and institutions on which our futures depend”

### **Anonymity and confidentiality**

In more recent research, Mendes, et al (2015) found that privacy and confidentiality issues were the most frequently reported ethical issues faced in daily practice by educational psychologists in Portugal. In fact, one of the main requirements for writing a research is to “gain agreement of participants before recording their input and give guarantees about confidentiality and destruction of recorded audio/video material after transcription” (McMillan and Weyers, 2010, p. 128).

The researcher needs to be concerned with how the data is collected and:

whether consent forms or other confidentiality agreements should be used. Likewise, the researcher should be concerned with the method of collecting data so that it does not harm the students in any way psychologically or emotionally. Also, care should be taken to secure the data so that the information does not have a negative effect upon the learning environment. (Tomal, 2003 p. 27)

Aveyard, 2014, p. 172, suggests, using the passive voice because “it can be useful in cases where you need to maintain anonymity, for example, ‘I was informed that . . .’”. Moreover, Tomal, 2003, p. 83, warns that respondents are “less likely to give critical opinions than if given complete anonymity through the use of a questionnaire”.

According to McMillan and Weyers, 2010, p .212, three fundamental tenets should be observed when conducting any research in order to protect human rights, dignity, health and safety of participants and researchers:

1. the research should do no harm;
2. consent should be voluntary; and
3. confidentiality should be respected throughout.

### **Maintaining confidentiality**

Some benefits of maintaining confidentiality, According to Nather, and Wong 2016, p. 155:

- Establishes trust between the researcher and subjects
- Reduces unwanted anxiety on the part of the individual
- Preserves the individual’s dignity
- Ensures that the participant feels respected
- Gives the participant control and autonomy

Participation in research is voluntary, thus a researcher's obligation to protect (the participant's) confidentiality is of paramount importance. People will not volunteer for research unless they are certain that the information they disclose will not be revealed to the public without their consent.

### **Institutional autonomy/institutional independence**

Hamilton and Smith, 2016, p. 67, emphasize the importance of the principle of "institutional autonomy/institutional independence. They indicate that it, "involves recognising the need to give

### **Data collection and analysis**

A questionnaire is used to collect data for this research. The questionnaire is targeted lecturers in postgraduate English Departments at the Libyan Universities. The objective of the questionnaire is to find out to what extent do Post EFL Departments follow the practices of (Item 10), Transparency and Integrity, which was issued by The Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya. 20 lecturers at higher EFL Libyan institutions including the Libyan Academy, Tripoli University, Zawia University, Sabratha University, Benghazi University and Gharyan University participated in the questionnaire. **See Appendix 2**

### **Presentation and Analysis of data collected from the questionnaire:**

#### **Analysis of question 1**

#### **1- There is a general ethical charter for all professions and specialties conducted by the department**

As a response to this statement, only 4 lecturers chose **yes** and 16 chose **No**. This result reveals that the majority of the lecturers (80%). believe that the post English departments have no written ethical charters.

#### **Analysis of question 2**

#### **2- The Department is impartial in disseminating information and data regarding its vision, mission and objectives.**

The responses to the second question were varied, however, the highest ratio was negative. 4 lecturers indicated that **rarely** is the case, while 8 went to **never**. Other 4 chose **usually**, and further 4 lecturers indicated that **sometimes** the department is impartial in disseminating information and data regarding its vision, mission and objectives. This result indicated that (60%) of the lecturers disagree with the statement.

### **Analysis of question 3**

**3- The Department guarantees the academic freedom of teaching staff, and enables them to express their opinions in accordance with the job description and customs applicable in educational institutions.**

As a response to this statement, only 4 lecturers chose **sometimes** and 16 chose **usually**. This result reveals that the majority of the lecturers (80%) believe that the Department guarantees the academic freedom of teaching staff.

### **Analysis of question 4**

**4- The Department explores students' views on the performance of the teaching staff**

The answers to this question showed that (60%) 12 lecturers out of twenty chose **Rarely**, and the other 8 represent (40%) chose **Never**. This result clearly indicates that all the lecturers believe that the Department does not explore students' views on the performance of the teaching staff.

### **Analysis of question 5**

**5- The Department of English explores students' views on the teaching staff relationship with the students**

This statement received the same response to the previous one, which indicates that the post English Departments do not explore either the students' views on the performance of the teaching staff nor their views on the teaching staff relationship with the students.

### **Analysis of question 6**

**6- The Department applies a firm and clear system of reward and punishment.**

As a response to this statement, 12 lecturers (60%) chose **sometimes** and 8 (40%) chose **Never**. This result indicates that lecturers tend to believe that sometimes the post English Departments apply a firm and clear system of reward and punishment.

### **Analysis of question 7**

**7- The Department takes into account the ethics of scientific research**

The reply to this statement varied, where 4 lecturers (20%) chose **Usually**, and other 4 chose **Sometimes**, while other 8 (40%) chose **Rarely** and other 4 (20%) chose **Never**. This result indicates that the majority (60%) of the

participants believe that the Post English Departments do not take into account the ethics of scientific research. This result is consistent with Saleh, (2020) who found that Libyan universities have no written ethical codes of teaching practice and do not account for the instructor's commitment to these codes. Nonetheless, the participants practiced some professional ethical behaviors according to their personal morals, values, and principles.

### **Analysis of question 8**

#### **8- The Department ensures transparency and full fairness in the administrative and financial transactions of all its members.**

As a response to this statement, 16 lecturers (80%) chose **Sometimes**, and the other 4 four lecturers chose **Never** (20%). Even though, the Post English Departments have no written ethical codes, the majority of the participants believe that these departments, to some extent, ensure transparency and fairness in the administrative and financial transactions of all its members.

### **Conclusion**

Codes of ethics for professionals in numerous organizations have taken on significance in recent years. As many professional associations, hospitals, and most government agencies, educational institutions should have codes of ethics to guide their activities and help them to be aware of their responsibilities. The absence of these codes of ethics may lead to human rights violation.

Adopting, respecting and applying these codes by all members of educational institution will undoubtedly enhance the quality of services provided by these institutions such as teaching, researching, consulting and translating. Moreover, it will reinforce the trust among all members of these institutions and build a trustful rapport with clients.

The results of present research revealed that the majority of the lecturers believe that the post English departments have no written ethical charters. It also indicated that the majority of them disagree with the statement that “the Post English Departments are neutral in disseminating information and data regarding their visions, missions and objectives. However, the results reveal that the majority of the lecturers who participated in the questionnaire, believe that the Post English Department guarantee the academic freedom of teaching staff.

Moreover, the results of present research revealed that that the Post English Departments do not explore either the students' views on the performance of the teaching staff nor their views on the teaching staff relationship with the students. Furthermore, the results indicated that lecturers tend to believe that sometimes the post English Departments apply a firm and clear system of reward and punishment.

The results also indicated that the majority of the participants in the questionnaire believe that the Post English Departments do not take into account the ethics of scientific research. This result is consistent with the result of first and main question which indicated that the majority of the lectures believe that the Post English Departments have no written ethical charters. lecturers rely on their personal morals, values, and principles.

The present research shed light on the most important principles such as integrity, honesty, transparency, respect for others, accountability, fairness, justice, anonymity, and confidentiality. In addition, it defined clearly important terms such as ethics, moral and bias. Furthermore, it highlighted criteria for assessing ethical acceptability.

More importantly, it provides the following recommendations:

- ✓ Each educational institution should have Ethical Charter and it must be made public.
- ✓ It is a recommended that all members of the educational institution to act ethically and in accordance with this Ethics Charter of the institution.
- ✓ All members of the educational institution (teaching staff, researchers, students, and employees) should comply with the ethical codes.
- ✓ They should act ethically when they conduct themselves in the workplace in executing their duties and making decisions.
- ✓ A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
- ✓ Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
- ✓ Research work must be written and conducted impartially, fairly, unbiased, free of plagiarism and respect participants identities.

- ✓ Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- ✓ Researchers should gain agreement of participants before recording their input and give guarantees about confidentiality
- ✓ Any research work should take into account all the ethical principles and be open to public.
- ✓ All members should refuse to participate in or conceal unethical practices.

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## Appendix 1

### The Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya

#### Item 10: Transparency and Integrity p. 21

(Translated from Arabic by the researcher)

**المحور العاشر: الشفافية والنزاهة**  
يتضمن هذا المحور بعداً واحداً هو:  
◀ الشفافية والنزاهة.

يجب على المؤسسة توفير موائيق أخلاقية للعاملين بالمؤسسة كافة، من أعضاء هيئة تدريس وكوادر مساندة، وموظفين تنص على واجباتهم وحقوقهم والممارسات الأخلاقية حين تنفيذ مهامهم.

كما يجب أن تتمتع المؤسسة بالنزاهة والشفافية في نشر المعلومات الصحيحة المتعلقة بجميع أنشطتها.

**أهم الممارسات الجيدة في هذا المحور:**

- وجود ميثاق أخلاقي عام وموائيق أخلاقية لجميع المهن والتخصصات التي تزاولها المؤسسة.
- يجب أن تتمتع المؤسسة بالنزاهة في نشر المعلومات والبيانات فيما يخص رؤيتها ورسالتها وأهدافها.
- يجب أن تطبق المؤسسة نظاماً ثابتاً وواضحاً للثواب والعقاب.
- يجب أن تضمن المؤسسة الشفافية والعدالة التامة في المعاملات الإدارية والمالية لجميع فئاتها.

- يجب أن تراعي المؤسسة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي والضوابط المنصوص عليها والمعايير المحلية والدولية ذات العلاقة.
- يجب أن تضمن المؤسسة الحرية الأكاديمية لأعضاء هيئة التدريس، والتعبير عن آرائهم وفق التوصيف الوظيفي والأعراف المعمول بها في المؤسسات التعليمية.
- يجب أن تستطلع المؤسسة آراء الطلاب في أداء أعضاء هيئة التدريس وعلاقتهم بالطلاب.

## Appendix 2 Lecturers' Questionnaire

**Dear colleague: You are kindly requested to participate in this Questionnaire.**

**The responses of the questionnaire will be a part of data collection for a research paper investigating the importance of adopting Ethical Codes in the Libyan Educational Institutions, specifically postgraduate EFL Departments in Libya.**

**The objective of the questionnaire is to find out to what extent do these Departments follow the practices of (Item 10), Transparency and Integrity, which was issued by The Directory of Ensuring the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Libya. Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. Your contribution is highly appreciated.**

**Please, indicate to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements**

**1- There is a general written ethical charter for all professions and specialties conducted by the department of English**

Yes

No

**2- The Department of English is impartial in disseminating information and data regarding its vision, mission and objectives.**

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

**3- The Department of English guarantees the academic freedom of teaching staff, and enable them to express their opinions in accordance**

**with the job description and customs applicable in educational institutions.**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Never**

**4- The Department of English explores students' views on the performance of the teaching staff**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Neve**

**5- The Department of English explores students' views on the teaching staff relationship with the students**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Never**

**6- The Department of English applies a firm and clear system of reward and punishment.**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Never**

**7- The Department of English takes into account the ethics of scientific research**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Never**

**8- The Department of English ensures transparency and full fairness in the administrative and financial transactions of all its members.**

**Always                  Usually                  Sometimes                  Rarely**  
**Neve**