

# The Use of 'Etic' to Solve Communication Barrier Between the Supervisor and the Student in Social Media Era

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## Abstract

Previous studies reported findings that indicate drawbacks linked to the long-term completion of the final assignment at various universities in Indonesia. One of the major findings of these studies revealed that the communication problem between students and supervisors is the main obstacle in the completion of their final assignment. Based on the assessment and observation at the level of Bachelor's degree (S1) and magister program (S2), it can be assumed that a high number of lecturers/supervisors incline to allocate less special time for guiding their students. They commonly give various reasons and indecisive time for guidance. The reason such as the lecturers' reluctance to supervise students in relation to their less interest of student's final paper topics, dislike of the student's personality, absence of consultation schedule without obvious reason, and being emotional in supervising the students' writing. In the contemporary era, communication is dominated by the individual use of social media. Each individual must always be connected with Smartphone, including lecturers and students. In addition, it also affects the communication pattern of lecturers and students. This research is a literature study using qualitative approach. It was done by examining and analyzing the prevailing problems based on the existing literature. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that code of ethics is needed as solution to overcome the problems of communication between student and supervisor. It formulates code of ethics named the "ETIC" code as a system or norm established as a set of basic principles of communication between students and supervisors to promote effective and efficient final assignment guidance in the contemporary era. "ETIC" is the acronym of the four basic principles of Ethics (E), Timeliness (T), Innovation (I), and Transparency (C). In addition, the "ETIC" code is expected to support the acceleration program of final assignment completion. Nevertheless, both systematic administrative procedures and the ease of access to documents of administrative requirements for final assignment are required to support the implementation of this code. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation process of this code and the acceleration program of final assignment completion are performed by the Final Assignment Ethics Review Committee (FAERC).

**Keywords:** final assignment guidance, social media, "ETIC" code, FAERC

## 1. Introduction

The final assignment is one of the requirements for students to gain education degrees based on their level of education (Diploma, Bachelor, and Postgraduate—both Master's and Doctoral Program). It aims to provide experience to students to think critically, systematically, and scientifically in solving a problem. During the process of writing and completion of the final assignment, supervisors are assigned to guide and assist students. However, in the process, many students frequently encounter various obstacles in finishing their projects. As a consequence of the drawbacks, students have to extend their period of study.

Previous studies reported findings which indicate drawbacks linked to the long-term completion of the final assignment at various universities in Indonesia (Kustiah, 2016; Asmawan, 2016; Hartato, Susanti, & Maryana, 2016; Siswanto & Sampurno, 2015; Julita, 2015; Firmansyah, 2014; Ernawati, 2013; Bukit, 2006; Kingofong, 2004). One of the major findings of these studies revealed that the communication problem between students and supervisors is the main obstacle in the completion of the final assignment. Meanwhile, one of

the indicators of accreditation of a study program is examined from the students' average period of study. Therefore, a concern and solution to address the problem is required.

Based on the assessment and observation at the level of Bachelor's degree (S1) and magister program (S2), both from author's personal experience and colleagues' experience as well as the results of the previous studies, it can be assumed that a high number of lecturers/supervisors incline to allocate less special time for guiding their students. They commonly give various reasons and indecisive time for guidance. The reason such as the lecturers' reluctance to supervise students in relation to their less interest of student's final paper topics, dislike of the student's personality, absence of consultation schedule without obvious reason, and being emotional in supervising student's writing.

Nevertheless, there are indeed several reasons that should be recognized and understood by the students in pertaining with their final assignment. Lecturers often face several external issues, including the substantial and sudden assignment from university that requires the attendance of lecturers, the need for lecturers to have sufficient rest in order to maintain their physical health, and the time to attend meetings both at study program, faculty, and university level.

Other obstacles encountered by students in completing their final assignment are also affected by several factors, both internal and external factors. Siang (2009) suggested that internal factors inhibiting the final assignment completion include the lack of student's motivation and low academic competence in expressing ideas or explicating problems. Meanwhile, external factors consist of the complex topics of the final assignment, the difficulty of collecting data and literatures, and the problems with the supervisor in the consultation process. Kangai and Mapolista (2012) stated that there are two main factors inhibiting the completion of the final assignment, namely the difficulty of finding books and journals for reference use and the inadequate communication and guidance/consultation with supervisors.

In overall, the internal and external factors can be addressed if students and supervisors have good communication. A good supervisor is a lecturer who is able to provide time, thoughts, and facilities in encouraging and motivating students towards the completion the final assignment. However, it is frequently less recognized by most of supervisors due to the numbers of tasks for the balance in accomplishing *Tri Dharma* of Higher Education (teaching, research, and community service). However, lecturers should be able to be efficient their role, particularly in the field of research that can be related to the final assignment of students. Lecturers can conduct research simultaneously with their duty in assisting students' final assignment. Hence, both lecturers and students will obtain mutual benefits. The existence of the joint research will purposely support lecturers in carrying out *Tri Dharma* of Higher Education, particularly in the aspect of research. Thus, lecturers can optimize the time allocated for independent research and convert it into the additional time to intensify guidance for student's final assignment completion.

The creation of an effective and efficient communication process between the supervisors and the students becomes the main key in the final assignment completion. One of the positive or negative determinants of a relationship is communication since it is a component of interpersonal relation construction (Sarwono, 1997). Effective interpersonal communication leads two individuals joining a communication process which encourage both of them to inculcate mutual attitudes (Rachmat, 1998). Recently, rapid communication technology which potential of being a means of creating limitless space and time for interpersonal communication has been developed widely. Thus, communication can be performed quickly or intensively.

The rapid development of communication technology cannot be detached from the significant influence of the rapid flow of globalization in all dimensions of human life.

Globalization constructs a borderless world where the political, economic, and cultural boundaries between nations and countries are torn away. The contemporary era is the impact of the rapid flow of change due to globalization, including those in pertaining with the flow of super highway information among the nations. Contemporary has a meaning and identical with style, in terms of fashion, language, communication and worldview. Particularly with the style of communication in the contemporary era, the impact of globalization is significant as featured by the rampant use of various media to communicate, to select effective communication methods, to exchange information quickly, briefly, and practically.

The contemporary era encourages individuals to leverage the most of technology in connecting individual with other individual and group regardless their actual presence. The producers of communication technology are fiercely competing to generate technological products that are able to connect effectively and efficiently all around the world, in a single hand “grip”. In line with the rapid development of information, the advance of communication facilities was very varied at once.

Previously, the means of wireless communication were more dominated on the use of mobile phone or cellular with its feature of short message service (*SMS*) and phone calls. Further developments create popular internet-based digital communication providers, such as *electronic mail (e-mail)*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Skype*, *Yahoo Messenger*, and so on. Subsequently, the boom of mass-based communication means (smartphone) or often referred to as social media is growing very rapidly indicated by the emergence of various applications including *WhatsApp*, *LINE*, *Telegram*, *Instagram*, *Path*, *LinkedIn*, and others. In the contemporary era, communication is dominated by the individual use of social media. Each individual must always be connected with Smartphone, including lecturers and students. In addition, it also affects the communication pattern of lecturers and students.

Based on the prevailing issues and the massive development of communication technology, the idea of the code of ethics named “ETIC” code is proposed as the basis and solution to overcome the problems of communication between students and lecturers with regards to the students’ final assignment. This “ETIC” code is relevant to the effort carried out jointly by students and supervisors in reaching mutual accomplishment, particularly in the acceleration of final assignment completion.

## **2. Methodology**

This study is a literature study with qualitative approach. Literature study was conducted by examining and analyzing the possible causes in relation with the final assignment completion. Subsequently, the solution to address the prevailing problems based on the existing literature review was formulated.

The solutions obtained from various literature reviews were combined into a system or innovative model that is useful in solving the discussed problems. In-depth analysis was supported by the findings reported by previous researchers. It is in line with Creswell (2009), “the literature review accomplishes multiple purposes. It shares with the reader the result of other studies that are closely related to the on being undertaken” (page), in which this statement can be perceived as the significance of relevant literatures in supporting the meaningfulness of a study and research to obtain in-depth analysis.

In this study, there are eight stages that should be traversed to conclude and find solutions in addressing communication problems between students and supervisor regarding with student final assignment. These eight stages consist of: *first*, inventory of ideas and thoughts performed by reading scientific articles related to the topic of the final assignment. *Second*, the selection of the sub-theme offered by the committee. *Third*, the contemplation of changing the sub-theme into a topic or title until the completion of writing process. *Fourth*, the design of writing which is the basic framework of the paper. This framework serves as a guideline for the compiled papers for not straying from the topic. *Fifth*, the collection of references relevant to the selected topic. References used in the form of books and scientific articles related to the selected topic. *Sixth*, the inventory of relevant theories and approach to support the selected topic. *Seventh*, the data and facts processing which are then associated with the prevailing theories to produce a particular concept or solution. *Eighth*, the writing process to complete the work as a finished scientific paper.

### 3. Discussion

The “ETIC” code is defined as a system or norm in the final assignment guidance. It is a set of basic principles in communication between students with supervisors regarding with the final assignment to support effective and efficient communication. “ETIC” is an acronym of the four basic principles of Ethics (E), Timeliness (T), Innovation (I), and Transparency (C). A more specific elaboration of these principles is presented as follows.

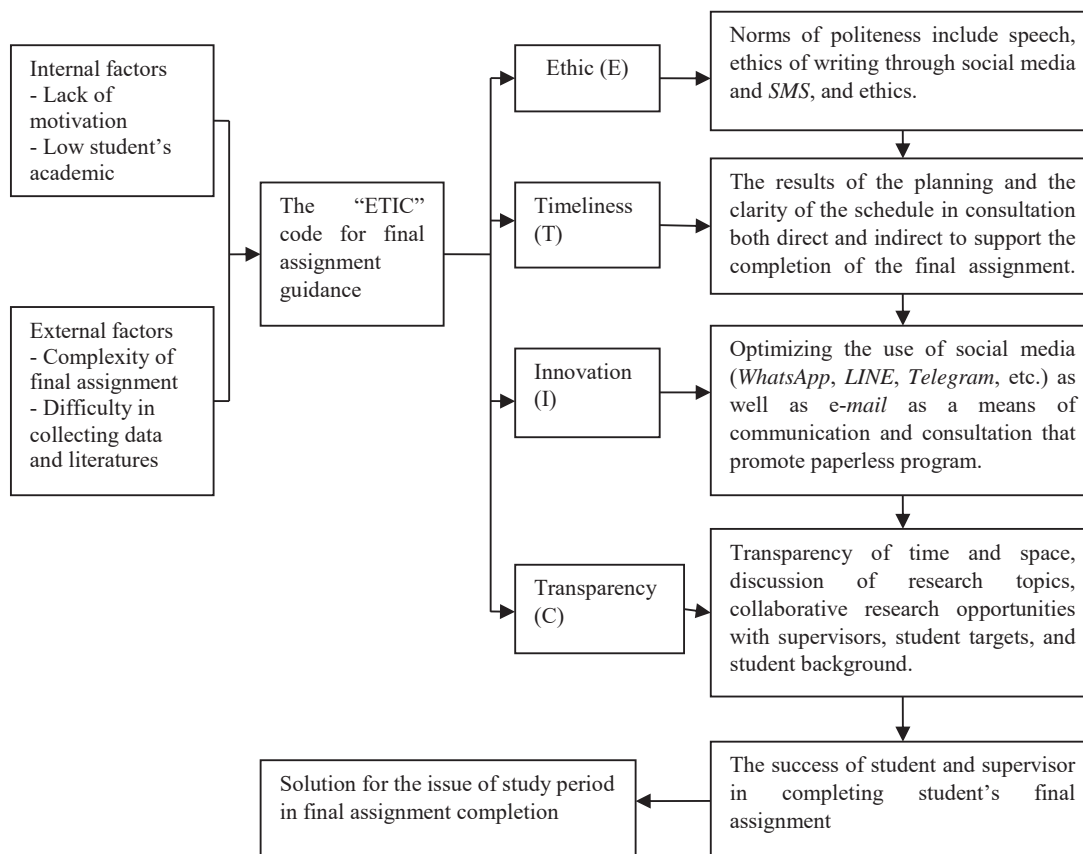


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of the “ETIC” Code as Final Assignment Guidance in Social Media Era.

*Firstly*, the basic principle of Ethics (E). In the context of this discussion, ethics is the knowledge of good and bad behaviors and attitudes linked to the moral rights and obligations of the parties who have interaction or communication (students and supervisors). The basic principles of ethics emphasize on the consciousness of respect and the implementation of general norms, such as the norm of politeness in the communication process between students and supervisors. The norms of politeness include speech and writing through social media or short message service (SMS), and student’s good behavioral ethics towards supervisors and *vice versa*. A sense of mutual respect and insurance of the rights and obligations are the parameters of decent communication.

The supervisor should inform the student about the available times for consultation or any media that can be used to contact them. In addition, the students should learn about the ethics in having interaction and communication with lecturers/supervisors, such as the sequence in writing SMS or others in social media, which includes greeting, expressing apology for interrupting lecturer’s time, conveying brief identity, conveying the intention unambiguously, with polite, easily understood language and ending it gratitude expression.

Likewise, the supervisor should inform the absence of their attendance accompanied by the reasons and the options for alternative time for consultation to the students. Thus, students and supervisors are expected to establish a convenience communication during the final assignment completion and even to continue the collaboration after the students’ graduation. Therefore, it is necessary to have an initial agreement between supervisors and students on the ethics of communication, the ethics of writing through social media and SMS, and ethics of behavior in prior to the process and completion of final assignment consultation.

*Second*, the basic principle of Timeliness (T). In the context of final assignment guidance, timeliness is oriented on the completion of the final assignment. It is the result of clear and structured planning about the meetings between students and supervisors. There is agreement on the suitable time and place for both direct and indirect meetings for consultation programs. Direct meetings can be carried out in the lecturers’ room, classroom, and campus area in accordance with the schedule set by mutual agreement. Meanwhile, for indirect discussion or consultation can be done through social media by creating a group which involve supervisors and supervised students. Both methods can be carried out by underlining the available schedule in consultation, both in direct and in social media.

In addition to a scheduled consultation, lecturers can employ social media and other means of communication to recall and motivate the students on a regular basis as an attempt to give attention for the students as well as to raise their enthusiasm to finish their assignment on time. Ernawati (2013) gave solution of the utilization of SMS *Reminder* to accelerate the completion of student’s period of study. It is possible to come up with ideas to develop social media reminder (SMR) in response to the widespread use of social media as a means of communication for supervisors and students.

*Third*, the basic principle of Innovation (I). Innovation is renewal, specifically in the process of consultation and optimization of the use of social media (*WhatsApp, LINE, Telegram*, and others) and website-based media (*e-mail*) as a means of communication and consultation. The implementation of technology encourages better performance, including time efficiency and better decision making (Jones & Kochtanek, 2004). This innovation aims to support the

paperless program in the activities of communication and consultation of the final assignment. This principle supports the implementation of paperless in the academic environment of higher education. Paperless is an endeavor to reduce the use of paper. It can be implemented by storing documents and data in digital form or by using paper in small quantities. When the student prepares the final assignment, it should be in soft file until the final stage which compels the print out or hard file of the writings.

*Fourth*, the basic principle of Transparency (C). It is one of the basic foundations in communication. Transparency in communications emphasizes mutual transparency in exchanging ideas, perception, and information between students and supervisors. It includes openness in terms of available time, discussion about the topic, opportunity of collaborative research with supervisors, student targets, and student background or personal recognition. Personal recognition is important in creating the transparency. It encourages supervisors to know students' personal life and to recognize their struggle, such as their origin, domicile (home/boarding house), family economy, personal association, life style, or affiliation (organization/employment), and student academic record. Similarly, student should also acknowledge the personality of respective supervisors, for instance, the entire activities, the history of illness, the family life, or the difficulties involved in performing their duties as a lecturer. Personal recognition is done to assist the lecturers to understand the situation and the management of the student so that there will be no suspicion or prejudice between students and supervisors.

To provide an illustration, a student has been an employee or stays far from campus. Student and supervisor have determined a schedule for consultation but on the D-day, the supervisor comes late and the student is forced to wait for hours that it interferes with the working time or distance must be taken to come home. Another example is when the supervisor who has a very tight schedule is chased after by student for the signature of the final proposal/project report that has been approaching the deadline. If the student is familiar with the preoccupation of the supervisor, the student can meet the supervisor in the precise time and location to ask for the signature, instead of chasing after the supervisor when it is close to the deadline.

It is expected that transparency from supervisor can help determining the topic of the final assignment by adjusting the students' personal background and academic ability, which can also help devising a schedule and method of consultation for the students. In addition, personal recognition will support the establishment of convenient communication between supervisors and students. Personal recognition can also bring mutual respect, mutual motivation, good communication ethics, and supervisors can indirectly provide character and personality coaching for students.

Transparency between students and lecturers can be performed through social media groups provided by *WhatsApp*, *LINE*, *Google+*, *Facebook*, *Telegram*, and so forth according to the agreement between supervisor and students. In addition, social media groups can be a means of monitoring from the supervisor to the students, both during the preparation of proposal, the implementation of research, and the report of the final assignment. Therefore, in case the students encounter a problem, they can consult it directly through social media groups. Mutual transparency is the core of the communication objectives between students and supervisors. It is expected to appropriately build and maintain a harmonious relationship between the two parties through various means of communication to attain the success of the final assignment. The explication of the "ETIC" code provides a bold picture that the four basic principles are a unified whole that cannot be detached in its implementation. Nevertheless, ethics will be

ineffective if there is indecisive timelines, innovation in communication, and mutual transparency. Likewise, timelines cannot be accomplished without the presence of ethics, innovation in communication, and a sense of mutual transparency. The principle of innovation will be suboptimal without the principle of ethics, timelines, and transparency. The principle of transparency cannot be realized without ethics, timelines, and innovation principles. The “ETIC” code is a comprehensive guideline for supervisor and students to ensure good achievement which ranges from the beginning to the final process.

The problems that become the inhibiting factor of the students’ final assignment may arise from the internal and external causes. Nevertheless, the problems are expected to be resolved by the provision of “ETIC” code as the guideline for the student and supervisor regarding with the completion of final assignment. The “ETIC” code appears to minimize the dropout rate due to incomplete final assignment. Consequently, it prevents the student from obtaining a higher degree from their former education. Furthermore, it is expected that the lower dropout rate, the shorter the student’s period of study. Shorter period of study will promote better quality of study program and university, in terms of accreditation in both nationally and internationally. The implementation of the “ETIC” code in the completion of final assignment in the contemporary Higher Education requires a joint commitment among lecturers, students, and regulation from the managers of the study program, department, faculty, and university as the administrator. In addition to the “ETIC” code as a means of acceleration of the guidance/consultation process, regulation and program to accelerate the completion of the final assignment, such as clarity of administrative procedures for final assignment (from submission of draft proposal to post-test administration in semester grading and graduation) and the ease of access on documents of administrative requirements will definitely support the implementation of “ETIC” code, effectively and efficiently.

The application of the “ETIC” code in final assignment guidance has required the establishment of the Final Assignment Ethics Review Committee (FAERC). FAERC consists of the representatives from supervisors, study program managers, and students. It has the authority to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the “ETIC” code as well as the process from the beginning to the end of the implementation of the final assignment guidance service from lecturers of the study program. In addition, it has the authority to give warning towards the lecturers as the supervisors of final assignment who are seen as less optimal in providing guidance based on the established code. If there is a supervisor who repeats mistake and does not heed the warning, FAERC may submit problems to the head of study program and dean of respective faculty to process the lecturer with strict sanction.

FAERC also has the authority to summon, discuss, confirm, and provide recommendations to students in pertaining with their violation against the “ETIC” code during the guidance of final assignment. For instance, students who very rarely attend the consultation of the final assignment, neglect contact from the supervisor, lost contact with peers and supervisor, and so on. It is expected that the existence of FAERC will be able to bridge the relationship of between supervisor and students when there is a constraint in the process and to encourage the quick, precise, and excellent completion of final assignment.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The effort to shorten the students’ period of study at higher education level requires serious attention from the entire academic community. The involvement of managers of university, study programs, and faculty, as well as staff and students simultaneously in the discussion and

implementation of acceleration program is necessary. Previous studies indicate that one of the inhibiting factors of students to complete academic study is the heavy process of final assignment completion. It can be stimulated by the lack of good communication between supervisors and students. One solution in addressing such communication problems is the necessity to apply the “ETIC” code which is suitable in this contemporary era. It is a set of basic principles in communication between students with supervisors regarding with the final assignment to support effective and efficient communication. “ETIC” is an acronym of the four basic principles of Ethics (E), Timeliness (T), Innovation (I), and Transparency (C).

The “ETIC” code as the guideline of guidance in the contemporary era presents as a result of the incorporation and integration of the concepts of interpersonal communication, the concept of public service development, and the massive development of communications technology innovations. It is expected to encourage supervisors to accommodate and follow up the trend of communication patterns and the utilization of the newest communication technology optimally. Recently, each individual must always be connected with social media through smart phone, including lecturers and students. It can be a guideline in a more efficient and beneficial communication between supervisor and students.

In addition to the “ETIC” code as a means of acceleration of the guidance/consultation process, specific regulation and program to accelerate the completion of the final assignment are also required. The clarity of administrative procedures for final assignment and the ease of access on documents of administrative requirements will definitely support the implementation of “ETIC” code, effectively and efficiently. The process of monitoring and evaluation of the “ETIC” code as well as the acceleration program are performed by FAERC. It is expected that the comprehensive and systematic implementation of these solutions, accompanied by the consciousness and sincerity of all academic community of Higher Education will be capable in addressing the issues related with study period which will have implication on the quality development of Higher Education.

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