

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Policy on International and National Conference Attendance and Visits to International Universities or Institutions for Collaboration Purposes

I. PREAMBLE

- 1.1. The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is committed to fostering a culture of excellence, continuous learning, and professional development among its academic and non-academic staff, as well as its students. The institution recognizes the invaluable role that conference attendance plays in advancing knowledge, promoting innovation, and facilitating networking within the academic and professional communities.
- 1.2. This Conference Attendance Policy is designed to guide and regulate the process by which DUT academic and non-academic staff, along with its students, can seek approval and financial support for attending conferences. By attending conferences, individuals have the opportunity to expand their horizons, share valuable insights, and contribute to the academic and professional landscape.
- 1.3. The policy aims to uphold transparency, fairness, and accountability in the selection and approval process, ensuring that conference attendance aligns with departmental and institutional objectives. It further underscores the responsibility of individuals supported for conference attendance to share their experiences and knowledge with colleagues and the academic community.
- 1.4. Moreover, this policy promotes the dissemination of knowledge by introducing a post-conference academic publication requirement, reinforcing DUT's commitment to academic excellence and the sharing of valuable insights gained through conference participation.
- 1.5. Through the implementation of this policy, DUT aspires to create a vibrant and dynamic environment that encourages continuous growth, fosters academic and professional advancement, and contributes to the enrichment of the broader academic and research community.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for conference attendance by academic and non-academic staff, as well as students at the DUT.
- 2.2. Conferences are important avenues for professional development, knowledge exchange, and networking, and this policy aims to ensure responsible and effective utilization of resources.
- 2.3. Aims to establish guidelines for academic and non-academic staff visits to international universities or institutions for collaboration purposes, whether funded by external agencies or internal university funding. Such visits contribute to enhancing academic quality, research collaboration, and internationalization efforts of the university.
- 2.4. This policy applies to all academic staff members of DUT who intend to visit international universities or institutions for collaboration purposes and International and National Conference Attendance, regardless of the funding source.

3. ACRONYMS

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FRC	Faculty Research Committee

DRC	Departmental Research Committee
RIE	Research Innovation and Engagement
DUT	Durban University of Technology
NRF	National Research Foundation

4. GENERAL DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Academic Staff	Academic staff, as defined in this policy, refers to individuals employed by DUT who hold academic positions within the institution. Academic staff members typically engage in teaching, research, and academic leadership roles, contributing to the intellectual and educational mission of the university. This category includes
Academic Supervisor or Faculty Advisor	A designated faculty member responsible for guiding and advising students in their academic pursuits.
Appeal Justification	A written explanation provided by the individual appealing a decision, outlining the reasons for attending the conference and addressing concerns raised during the initial request review.
Appeal Process	A formal procedure allowing individuals whose conference attendance requests have been denied to request a review and reconsideration of the decision.
Budget Plan	A detailed breakdown of anticipated expenses related to conference attendance, including registration fees, travel, accommodation, and per diem allowances.
Code of Conduct	A set of ethical and professional standards that attendees are expected to adhere to during conference participation.
Conference	A formal event or gathering organized around a specific theme, discipline, or industry, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, networking, and professional development. For the purposes of this policy, 'professional conferences' are not included.
Conference Attendance Request	A formal proposal submitted by academic and professional staff or students to seek approval and funding for attending a conference.
Department Head or Head of Department	The faculty member or administrator in charge of a specific academic department within DUT.
Emerging Researcher	Any academic staff who holds a position of senior lecturer or lecturer and may or may not be National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF) rated as Y, and P.
Established Researcher	Any academic staff who holds the position of full professor or associate professor and may or may not be NRF rated as C, B and A.
Executive Dean	The head of an academic faculty within DUT, responsible for overseeing academic and administrative matters within their respective area.
External Funding	Funding provided by external agencies, organizations, or sponsors to support academic staff visits for international collaboration.
Financial Support	Funding provided by DUT to cover conference-related expenses, subject to budgetary availability.
Internal University Funding	Funding allocated by the university to support academic staff visits for international collaboration or conference attendance.

International Collaboration Visit	Refers to a temporary visit by academic staff to international universities or institutions for the purpose of research collaboration, academic exchange, joint projects, or other related activities.
Non-academic Staff	Non-academic staff, as defined in this policy, refers to individuals employed by DUT in non-academic roles. These staff members hold positions that provide administrative, technical, or professional support to the academic and operational functions of the university. This category encompasses roles such as administrative staff, managers, technicians, and specialists who contribute to the efficient and effective operation of the institution in various non-teaching and non-research
Post-Conference Report	A summary document detailing the insights, knowledge gained, and experiences from the conference, to be shared with colleagues and the academic community.
Review Authority	The person or entity responsible for assessing and making decisions regarding the appeal.
Students	Encompasses individuals who are currently enrolled in academic programs at DUT, including undergraduate and postgraduate students.

5. ELIGIBILITY

- 5.1. Academic Staff: All academic staff members are eligible to apply for conference attendance subject to the approval process outlined in this policy.
- 5.2. Students: Conference attendance by students may be considered, but it is subject to specific guidelines and must align with academic and research objectives.
- 5.3. Non-academic Staff: Conference attendance by professional staff may be considered, but it is subject to specific guidelines and must align with academic and research objectives.

6. CONDITIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL FOR STAFF MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ABROAD

- 6.1. All international conference attendance by staff members will require prior approval from the institution, irrespective of the funding source.
- 6.2. All applicants must have previously published research output aligned with the theme or focus of the conference, except for first-time applicants.
- 6.3. Participation in conferences will be contingent upon acceptance of a paper for oral presentation.
- 6.4. Applicants must demonstrate their intention to have prominent participation in the conference itself, which may include presenting papers, leading sessions, participating in panels, or engaging in other significant ways.

7. CONFERENCE SELECTION AND APPROVAL

7.1 Academic Staff

- 7.1.1. Academic staff members interested in attending a conference must submit a formal request to their respective Faculty Research Committee (FRC).
- 7.1.2. The request should include details of the conference, its relevance to the staff member's role or field of study, and an estimate of associated costs.
- 7.1.3. The FRC will review the request and consider its alignment with faculty and institutional goals.

- 7.1.4. If approved at the departmental (FRC) level, the request will proceed to the relevant Executive Dean for approval.
- 7.1.5. Final approval will be granted by the Institutional Conference Committee.

7.2 Non-Academic Staff

- 7.2.1. Non-academic staff members interested in attending a conference must submit a formal request to their respective manager or unit head, as applicable.
- 7.2.2. The request should include details of the conference, its relevance to the staff member's role, and an estimate of associated costs.
- 7.2.3. The manager or department head will review the request and consider its alignment with departmental and institutional goals.
- 7.2.4. Final approval will be granted by the Institutional Conference Committee.

7.3 Students

- 7.3.1. Students interested in attending a conference must seek endorsement from their academic or research supervisor.
- 7.3.2. The request should include the name of the conference, its academic or professional relevance, and an estimated budget for attendance.
- 7.3.3. The academic supervisor will review the request and consider its alignment with the student's academic goals and programme of study.
- 7.3.4. If approved at the academic level, the request will be forwarded to the department (DRC) and then faculty (FRC) for budgetary considerations.
- 7.3.5. Final approval will be granted by the Institutional Conference Committee.
- 7.3.6. Staff members who are also students need to comply with both their employment requirements for leave and this routing of approval for conference attendance.

8. FUNDING AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Academic and Non-academic Staff

- 8.1.1. The institution may provide funding for conference attendance based on availability and budgetary considerations.
- 8.1.2. Established academic staff/ researchers are encouraged to seek external funding or grants when available and may only be granted funding subject to this requirement.
- 8.1.3. Costs related to conference attendance may include registration fees, travel and related costs, accommodation, and per diem allowances.
- 8.1.4. Internal funding for conferences may only be available for emerging researchers.
- 8.1.5. A detailed budget plan must be submitted as part of the conference request.
- 8.1.6. The Executive responsible for research and innovation may impose funding limits for international and/or national conferences.

8.2 Students

- 8.2.1. The institution may offer financial support to students for conference attendance based on the availability of funds.
- 8.2.2. Students are encouraged to explore external funding opportunities, scholarships, and grants.
- 8.2.3. The student's academic department may provide guidance on available funding sources.
- 8.2.4. The conference request should include a breakdown of anticipated expenses and any requested financial support.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1 Academic and Non-academic Staff

- 9.1.1. Staff members attending conferences are responsible for their professional conduct and for representing DUT positively by aligning with DUT values and principles.
- 9.1.2. It is the responsibility of attendees to provide post-conference reports to share knowledge and insights with colleagues and the academic community on or before 15 days after the attendance of the conference.

9.2 Students

- 9.2.1. Students attending conferences are expected to adhere to the institution's code of conduct and academic standards.
- 9.2.2. Students must submit post-conference reports, papers, or presentations as required by their academic department on or before 15 days after the attendance of the conference.

10. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 10.1. The faculty or division where conference attendance originates must maintain records of approvals and associated expenses.
- 10.2. These records will be subject to periodic review and audit.
- 10.3. Records must be always updated as they may be required within a short period.

11. POST-CONFERENCE ACADEMIC PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT

- 11.1. Individuals who have attended a conference with institutional financial support must prepare and submit a journal article.
- 11.2. Staff members funded by institutional funding may only qualify to attend international conferences once per year.
- 11.3. Additional conference attendance may be granted based on an assessment of the circumstances and approval by the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Research and Innovation.
- 11.4. The academic staff can qualify for the next cycle of conference attendance only after proof of submission of journal article acceptance and application.
- 11.5. The journal selected for publication must be recognized and accredited as per the DHET Research 2015

policy.

- 11.6. The paper must be submitted for publication within 12 months from the date of the conference attendance and no further support in terms of conference attendance shall be granted for the staff member who has not published a journal article (accredited).
- 11.7. Upon submission, individuals must provide confirmation of the paper's acceptance for publication.
- 11.8. In exceptional cases where publication is not feasible within the specified timeframe, individuals may request an exemption or an extension of the requirement. Such requests will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.
- 11.9. DUT will maintain records of individuals' compliance with the publication requirement.

12. ACADEMIC STAFF VISITS TO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES OR INSTITUTIONS FOR COLLABORATION PURPOSES

12.1 Approval Process

- 12.1.1. Academic staff members intending to undertake an international collaboration visit must obtain prior approval from their department head.
- 12.1.2. The head of the department must obtain prior approval from the executive dean.
- 12.1.3. Approval for visits funded by external agencies must also be obtained from the university's grants or research office.
- 12.1.4. All visits must align with the strategic priorities and goals of the university.
- 12.1.5. The final approval of such a visit rests with the deputy vice-chancellor responsible for research and innovation.

12.2 Objectives of Visit

- 12.2.1. The primary objectives of the international collaboration visit should be clearly defined and documented, including the expected outcomes and deliverables.
- 12.2.2. Visits may include activities such as collaborative research, joint publications, academic seminars, workshops, conferences, or capacity-building initiatives.

12.3 Funding Sources

- 12.3.1. Academic staff members may seek funding for their international collaboration visit from external agencies or internal university funding sources.
- 12.3.2. All funding applications must adhere to the respective guidelines and regulations set forth by the funding source.

12.4 Duration and Frequency

- 12.4.1. The duration of the international collaboration visit should be commensurate with the objectives and activities planned.
- 12.4.2. Academic staff members are encouraged to ensure that the frequency of visits aligns with their academic responsibilities and commitments at the university.

12.5 Reporting and Evaluation

- 12.5.1. Academic staff members are required to submit a detailed report upon completion of their international collaboration visit, outlining the activities undertaken, outcomes achieved, and any challenges encountered.
- 12.5.2. Evaluation of the visit's impact on academic research, collaboration, and internationalization efforts will be conducted by the department head or relevant academic authority.
- 12.5.3. The full presentation of the visit must be made to the faculty six weeks after the return of the academic staff member.

12.6 Compliance with Policies and Regulations

- 12.6.1. Academic staff members must adhere to all relevant university policies, including travel policies, ethical guidelines, and intellectual property rights, during their international collaboration visit.

12.7 Responsibilities

- 12.7.1. Academic Staff are responsible for initiating and planning the international collaboration visit, obtaining necessary approvals, and fulfilling reporting requirements.
- 12.7.2. Department Heads are responsible for approving visit proposals, ensuring alignment with departmental goals, and evaluating visit outcomes.
- 12.7.3. Grants or Research Office: Responsible for providing guidance on funding opportunities, assisting with funding applications, and ensuring compliance with funding regulations.

13. APPEAL PROCESS

- 13.1.1. The individual whose request has been denied may submit a written appeal to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- 13.1.2. The appeal should include a clear and detailed justification for attending the conference and should address any concerns or issues raised during the initial request review.
- 13.1.3. The authority receiving the appeal will conduct a thorough review, considering the grounds for the appeal and alignment with departmental and institutional goals.
- 13.1.4. The decision of the authority reviewing the appeal is final and binding.
- 13.1.5. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the individual who submitted the appeal.
- 13.1.6. If the appeal is approved, further instructions regarding funding and attendance will be provided.

14. REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

- 14.1.1. This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.
- 14.1.2. Amendments may be made to address changing circumstances, funding availability, and institutional objectives.

15. APPROVAL

15.1.1. This Conference Attendance Policy is approved by the Senate and is effective from the date of the approval.