

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Policy on Research Integrity, Ethics, and Authorship

I. PREAMBLE

I.1 Background

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is committed to advancing research excellence and innovation by upholding the highest standards of integrity and ethics, as outlined in the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Research Outputs Policy. Guided by the ENVISION2030 strategic plan, DUT emphasizes core values of transparency, honesty, integrity, respect, accountability and the principles of fairness, professionalism, commitment, compassion, and excellence. This consolidated policy serves as a comprehensive resource for research integrity, ethics, and authorship, ensuring that all research activities reflect DUT's dedication to ethical conduct, academic rigour, and the betterment of society. This policy is therefore guided by the following principles:

- I.1.1. In alignment with our Institutional Strategic Plan, we uphold the principles of integrity and excellence in all our scholarly work.
- I.1.2. With the Institutional Strategic Plan as our compass, we navigate toward fostering a culture of academic rigour and ethical conduct in our research and publications.
- I.1.3. In keeping with the spirit of the Institutional Strategic Plan, we commit to promoting transparency and accountability in research authorship.
- I.1.4. With the principles of the Institutional Strategic Plan firmly in our hearts we strive for inclusivity and fairness in all aspects of scholarly collaboration.

DUT further recognises that:

- I.1.5. Promoting research integrity and preventing unethical behaviour and research misconduct that undermines confidence in the quality of scientific knowledge is a shared responsibility of DUT, its researchers, staff, and individuals [stakeholders] who play an integral role in research.
- I.1.6. Research integrity is the basis of high-quality research that promotes and emphasizes responsible research conduct and practices with absolute transparency and honesty.
- I.1.7. The need to support a culture of research integrity and promote responsible conduct of research, innovation, and governance in keeping with internationally accepted principles stated in the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity which intersects with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, with applicable principles summarized as such:

SINGAPORE STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY (2010)	EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH INTEGRITY (2017)
Honesty in all aspects of research.	Reliability in ensuring the quality of research, reflected in the design, the methodology, the analysis, and the use of resources.

Accountability in the conduct of research.	Honesty in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting, and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way.
Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others.	Respect for colleagues, research participants, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage, and the environment.
Good stewardship of research on behalf of others	Accountability for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organization, for training, supervision

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is for a culture of research integrity, research ethics and excellence across all disciplines to be cultivated at DUT. Guided by internationally recognized principles of objectivity, respect, transparency, accuracy, and responsibility, we aim to foster a robust, equitable and collaborative environment for rigorous research, high-quality innovation, and scholarly advancement. Through our authorship and research ethics framework, we seek to ensure that all research conducted, whether involving human participants, animals, the environment or sensitive data, upholds the highest ethical standards. We also seek to ensure that all contributions are honestly and fairly attributed. Our commitment to integrity not only reflects our institutional values and principles but also supports our vision of making a positive impact on society through ethical research practices and academic excellence.

1.3 Applicability

Individuals that this policy applies to are:

- 1.3.1. Everyone who is a part of the DUT research and innovation community, including all its employees, staff members (academic and support staff alike), students, postdoctoral research fellows, honorary and visiting researchers, and research associates across all disciplines. The scope of this policy further applies to all who are affiliated with DUT, as well as external researcher(s) and innovator(s) who collaborate, undertake, or participate in research through DUT.
- 1.3.2. All structures, committees and oversight bodies are responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with this and related policies.
- 1.3.3. Prospective, current and retrospective scholarly works, ensuring that ethical authorship and contributorship standards are maintained throughout the research and publication process

1.4 Acronyms

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DVC: RIE	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research Innovation and Engagement
DUT	Durban University of Technology

FFP	Fabrication, Falsification, and Plagiarism
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
FREC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
ICMJE	International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
IREC	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
REC	Research Ethics Committee

1.5 Definitions

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

Academic Integrity	Ethical principles and values underpin honest and responsible academic conduct, including practices such as proper citation, avoiding plagiarism, and upholding ethical standards in research and learning.
Acknowledgements	Formal recognition within a scholarly work to credit individuals or entities who have made valuable contributions or provided support to the research, even if they do not qualify as authors.
Animals	Non-human vertebrates capable of being aware of sensations and emotions, feeling pain and suffering, and experiencing a state of well-being; they are aware of their surroundings and of what happens to them.
Authorship	The status granted to individuals who have made substantial intellectual or creative contributions to the conception, design, execution, analysis, interpretation, or writing of a scholarly work, such as a research paper, article, or book.
Contributorship	Acknowledging individuals who have made significant but non-authorship contributions to a scholarly work, such as technical assistance, data collection, funding acquisition, or general support.
Data falsification/ manipulation	The deliberate alteration, fabrication, manipulation, or misrepresentation of research data and results to produce desired outcomes to deceive or mislead others
Data misrepresentation	The incorrect or biased analysis, presentation, or understanding of data collected during a study.
Dissemination of research findings	All the verbal and nonverbal processes and the means of sharing research findings by publication, hosting or promotions
DUT	Durban University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended.
Environment	The setting or context in which a study is conducted and where data is collected. It includes all external factors and conditions that may influence or interact with the research process. The environment can be physical, social, or cultural.

Faculty Research Committee (FRC)	The Faculty-based subcommittee of the Faculty Board at the Durban University of Technology that is constituted to deal with research issues within a faculty.
Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)	The Faculty-based subcommittee of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee.
Gift Authorship	Occurs when individuals are included as authors in a scholarly work without having made substantial intellectual or creative contributions, often done as a courtesy or for non-academic reasons.
Ghost Authorship	Happens when individuals who have made substantial contributions to a scholarly work are intentionally omitted from the list of authors, undermining transparency and accountability in authorship.
Human-Related Research	Studies involving human participants. This requires ethical assessment and approval. Ethical considerations include respecting participants' autonomy, fair recruitment, equitable distribution of burdens and benefits, and special safeguards for vulnerable groups.
Human Subject & Research Participant	An individual about whom data is obtained through intervention, interaction, or identifiable private information.
Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC)	A standing subcommittee of Senate responsible for ensuring that all research at the Durban University of Technology meets statutory requirements and ethical standards.
Minimal Risk Research	Research where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort are not greater than those encountered in daily life or routine physical or psychological tests.
Research	Creative and systematic investigation to validate previous findings, contribute to new knowledge, and increase scientific and technological knowledge.
Research Committee	A group overseeing research-related policies, procedures, and ethics, reviewing proposals, and providing guidance on research matters.
Research Ethics	Application of internationally accepted criteria, norms, and values in research conduct involving humans, animals, the environment, and creative arts.
Research Integrity	Use of honest and verifiable methods in proposing, performing, and evaluating research, with adherence to rules, regulations, and professional codes.
Research Participants	Individuals or animals contributing data or information to a study. Humans may participate through surveys, interviews, experiments, or observations, while animals provide data through physiological responses, behaviour, or controlled interactions.
Scholarly Work	Research outputs such as papers, articles, theses, dissertations, books, and other forms of academic writing.
Supervisor	A university staff member or external expert providing technical and academic guidance to a student for their dissertation or thesis.
University	Refers to the Durban University of Technology, as constituted under the Higher Education Act, 1997.

1.6 Implementation of the Policy

To implement the policy, the following considerations are to be actioned:

- a) Annual Training: Organize and conduct multiple workshops, seminars, and webinars each academic year to discuss research integrity, ethics, and associated challenges.
- b) Collaboration and Benchmarking: Collaborate with other institutions both nationally and internationally to enhance and present training programs on research integrity.
- c) Protocols for Concerns: Establish clear protocols for raising concerns related to breaches of research integrity guidelines, including a whistleblowing mechanism.
- d) Protection of Whistleblowers: Ensure that individuals who report concerns, particularly against superiors, have their careers safeguarded.
- e) Investigations and Recommendations: The office responsible for research ethics will investigate reported non-compliance or misconduct and propose recommendations or disciplinary actions as necessary.

1.7 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of formal approval and adoption or earlier if circumstances so dictate as required by the standard operating procedures of Senate. It must be revised and updated as needed to reflect changes in best practices and ethical guidelines.

2. RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Research integrity forms the cornerstone of academic excellence and innovation at Durban University of Technology (DUT). By adhering to the core principles of objectivity, respect, transparency, accuracy, and responsibility, DUT ensures that all research activities are conducted ethically and with the utmost professionalism. This section delves into the guidelines and practices that uphold research integrity at DUT, highlighting the importance of fostering a robust research environment, the attribution of authorship, the ethical treatment of human and animal participants, and the protocols for addressing research misconduct. The policy includes commitments to the following general principles and practices:

2.1 Honesty and Integrity

- 2.1.1. DUT obliges its research community to maintain the highest standard of honesty and integrity in the conduct of research. The principle of honesty is critical in the quest to produce reliable knowledge.
- 2.1.2. This moral responsibility of honesty in research entails trustworthiness in choosing and using appropriate research methodology, engaging research participants and collecting data, analysing results and/or findings, reporting research data, disseminating research outcomes, and fostering collaboration and confidence between researchers.
- 2.1.3. In this context, this policy underscores that practising honesty in the conduct of research promotes integrity, because other values such as objectivity and transparency are also upheld.
- 2.1.4. Adhering to the values of honesty and integrity in research, therefore, necessitates researchers to avoid all forms of unnecessary biases or subjectivity, to completely avoid data misinterpretation and manipulation, fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism (FFP), to declare conflict of interest, and not to misuse research resources.

2.1.5. Examples of data misinterpretation include:

- a) Statistical Errors: Using inappropriate statistical methods or misapplying statistical techniques can lead to incorrect conclusions. This includes errors like misuse of p-values, ignoring confounding variables, or improper handling of data distributions.
- b) Misleading Visualization: Presenting data through graphs, charts, or other visual means in a way that misleads the reader. This can include using inappropriate scales, omitting relevant data points, or manipulating visual representations to exaggerate findings.
- c) Selective Reporting: Reporting only favourable results while omitting non-significant or contradictory data, leading to a skewed understanding of the research findings. This is also known as "cherry-picking" data.
- d) Overgeneralization: Drawing broad conclusions from a limited dataset. This occurs when findings from a specific sample are generalized to a wider population without proper justification.
- e) Misinterpretation of Correlation vs. Causation: Assuming that a correlation between two variables implies a causal relationship, without sufficient evidence to support this claim.
- f) Contextual Misunderstanding: Ignoring or misunderstanding the context in which the data was collected. This can lead to incorrect conclusions about its relevance or applicability.
- g) Biased Interpretation: Allowing personal biases or preconceived notions to influence the interpretation of data, leading to conclusions that are not objectively supported by the data.
- h) Incorrect Data Entry or Handling: Errors in data entry, coding, or handling that lead to incorrect analysis and conclusions.

2.1.6. Examples of data manipulation include:

- a) Fabrication: Making up data or results that were never obtained. This includes creating false data sets or reporting experiments that were never conducted.
- b) Falsification: Altering research data and results, such as changing, omitting, or deleting data points to achieve desired outcomes. This includes adjusting measurements, modifying statistical results, or selectively reporting certain data.
- c) Data Massaging: Making minor, often subtle, changes to the data to make results appear more significant or to fit a hypothesis. This can include rounding numbers, smoothing data points, or selectively excluding outliers.
- d) P-Hacking: Manipulating data collection, analysis, or reporting to achieve a statistically significant p-value. This involves testing multiple variables and only reporting those that show significant results.
- e) Cherry-Picking: Selecting data that supports a hypothesis while ignoring data that contradicts it. This leads to a biased and misleading representation of the findings.
- f) Salami Slicing: Splitting data from a single study into multiple publications to inflate the number of publications. This can mislead others about the scope and significance of the research.
- g) Inappropriate Statistical Analysis: Using statistical techniques improperly or selectively to obtain favourable results. This includes misapplying statistical tests, using incorrect models, or manipulating data sets to achieve desired outcomes.
- h) Misrepresentation of Data: Misleadingly presenting data through graphs, tables, or narratives

that creates a false impression of the research findings. This can include using improper scales, selective highlighting, or omitting critical information.

2.1.7. Examples of data falsification include:

- a) Alteration of Data: Changing data points to achieve desired outcomes. This includes modifying measurements, adjusting values, or changing experimental results to fit a hypothesis or expected trend.
- b) Omission of Data: Intentionally excluding data that does not support the desired outcome or hypothesis. This can involve leaving out outliers, negative results, or any data that contradicts the intended conclusion.
- c) Fabrication of Data: Creating data that did not exist. This involves generating false data points, experiments, or results that were never actually collected or conducted.
- d) Selective Reporting: Reporting only a subset of the data that supports the desired outcome while ignoring or hiding data that contradicts it. This can lead to biased and misleading conclusions.
- e) Manipulation of Images and Visuals: Altering images, graphs, or other visual data representations to mislead viewers. This includes editing images, changing scales, or manipulating graphical elements to exaggerate findings.
- f) Misrepresentation of Methods: Describing methods inaccurately to make it appear as though the data collection and analysis were conducted properly when they were not. This can involve falsely reporting the use of controls, blinding, or specific procedures.
- g) Inaccurate Statistical Analysis: Applying inappropriate statistical methods or selectively reporting statistical results to produce misleading conclusions. This includes cherry-picking statistical tests that show significant results while ignoring those that do not.

2.2 Undertaking Research and Developing Knowledge

In keeping with the practice of integrity in scientific research, DUT demands that any research conducted and produced by its staff, students or affiliates must use research methodologies that are suitable for influencing and ensuring the reliability and accuracy of information acquired and developed. Therefore, this research integrity policy acknowledges that a researcher's ability to reach a sound conclusion(s), make the correct judgment, and generate knowledge is dependent on how research data is produced and analysed, which is directly linked to the appropriateness of the research method(s) adopted.

2.3 Research Participants and the Environment

The environment is crucial as it can affect the validity and reliability of the research results. Researchers must carefully consider and often control environmental factors to ensure that their findings are accurate and generalizable. Different environments include the following:

- a) Physical Environment: The tangible surroundings where the research takes place, such as a laboratory, field site, office, or classroom. This includes conditions like lighting, temperature, and layout.
- b) Social Environment: The interpersonal and societal context that can affect the research, including the relationships between participants, researchers, and any influencing social factors.

- c) Cultural Environment: The norms, values, and practices of a particular group or community that may impact the research findings or the way data is interpreted.
- d) Experimental Environment: In controlled experiments, this includes the specific conditions or variables that researchers manipulate to observe their effects on participants or subjects.

2.4 Managing and Storing Research Data

Effective research data management is crucial for maintaining data integrity, ensuring data security, and facilitating the reuse of information. At DUT, adherence to guidelines for research data storage and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) is mandatory. This section outlines the requirements for managing research data, from collection through storage and disposal, ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards. The following aspects are to be adhered to:

2.4.1. Data Collection and Storage:

- a) **Compliance**: Ensure all research data collection aligns with DUT Guidelines for Research Data Storage and POPIA.
- b) **Security**: Use secure methods for data storage, including cloud storage, hard drives, USBs, tapes, or Google Drive, to protect data from unauthorized access.

2.4.2. Data Management:

- a) **Planning**: Develop a comprehensive data management plan outlining storage, organization, and sharing protocols.
- b) **Archiving**: Implement procedures for archiving data to ensure long-term preservation and easy retrieval.

2.4.3. Ethical Obligations:

- a) **Oversight**: Principal researchers and supervisors must enforce ethical data management practices among their students.
- b) **Protocols**: Follow established storage and data disposal protocols as outlined in research proposals.

2.4.4. Data Protection:

- a) **Safeguarding**: Strictly protect personal identifiers to prevent exploitation by third parties, in compliance with POPIA.

2.4.5. Accessibility and Reuse:

- a) **Access**: Ensure data is accessible for future use while maintaining security and confidentiality.
- b) **Reusability**: Facilitate data reuse by adhering to best practices in data documentation and organization.

2.4.6. Data Disposal:

- a) **Adherence to proposal guidelines**: Ensure that the data disposal protocols highlighted in research proposals and ethical clearance applications are adhered to.
- b) **Secure Deletion**: Use approved methods for securely deleting digital data, such as encryption

or data wiping tools, to ensure that it cannot be recovered or misused.

- c) **Physical Destruction:** For physical documents (e.g., paper survey responses) and storage media (e.g., hard drives, USBs), follow protocols for physical destruction to render the data irretrievable.
- d) **Documentation:** Maintain records of data disposal activities, including the date, method, and personnel involved, to ensure accountability and compliance with institutional policies

2.5 Consideration of Ethical Issues

Researchers are obliged to have the highest consideration for ethical issues. These are governed by a set of moral principles in terms of the following fundamental general considerations:

- a) Minimal risk of harm to participants and researchers;
- b) Potential for benefit by society;
- c) Maintenance of the dignity of participants;
- d) Minimal risk of harm to the environment;
- e) Voluntary informed consent by participants, or special safeguards where this is not possible;
- f) Transparency in declaring funding sources;
- g) Confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents;
- h) Acknowledgement of assistance;
- i) Appropriate publication and dissemination of research results; and
- j) Independence and impartiality of researchers.

2.6 Disseminating Research Findings and Publication Practices

Dissemination of research findings is essential for the uptake and use of research results to promote the success and sustainability of based research, and it is the responsibility of researchers to disseminate their research findings accurately. Examples of methods of dissemination include the following:

- a) Research report;
- b) Academic dissertation/thesis;
- c) Research abstract paper;
- d) Summarising findings in progress reports for funders;
- e) Publishing project findings in journals, books or book chapters, and state-wide publications;
- f) Presenting at national or international conferences and meetings of professional associations;
- g) Presenting results to local community groups and other local stakeholders;

- h) Creating and distributing materials, such as flyers, guides, pamphlets, and DVDs;
- i) Creating toolkits of training materials and curricula for other communities;
- j) Sharing information through social media or on an organisation's website;
- k) Disseminating information on an organisation's website;
- l) Discussing project activities on the radio;
- m) Publishing information in any newspaper electronic or hardcopy;
- n) Hosting promotion events at fairs and schools, health facilities, political platforms, or academic functions; and
- o) Issuing a press release

- 2.6.1. To uphold research integrity, all research findings must be disseminated responsibly and appropriately in credible platforms and media.
- 2.6.2. Innovations should also show the value addition to research and development as well as transforming the livelihoods of most of our people.
- 2.6.3. Predatory publishing is prohibited, and researchers must always be vigilant in checking the credibility of publishing platforms. The Research Office should be consulted if in any doubt.
- 2.6.4. The Department of Higher Education publishes a list of accredited journals every year on its website. It is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that the publishing platform is among the accredited ones.

2.7 Supervision of Supervisees (Students)

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) upholds high academic standards and integrity in the supervision process for postgraduate research degrees. This commitment is reflected in the Policy for Masters and Doctoral Studies, which outlines the responsibilities of both supervisors and supervisees. The policy aims to foster a respectful, productive, and ethical research environment, ensuring the integrity and quality of research conducted under the university's auspices. In this regard, the following is to be noted:

2.7.1. Responsibilities of DUT Supervisors:

- a) Maintain High Standards and Avoid Abusive Supervision: Ensure supervision adheres to high academic and ethical standards.
- b) Role Modelling and Quality Supervision: Act as role models and provide supervision that helps students acquire necessary skills and knowledge.
- c) Ensure Research Integrity and Ethics Compliance: Screen research projects for integrity and ethics issues and ensure that the student complies with IREC procedures and reports any deviations or adverse events.
- d) Stay Informed on Ethical Practices: Keep up to date with ethical practices and requirements in the academic research environment and their specific disciplines. This includes regular completion of ethics training.

2.7.2. Responsibilities of DUT Supervisees:

- a) Commitment to Learning and Development: Be open to learning and acquiring critical research skills for development as scholars.
- b) Compliance with Policies: Be aware of and comply with all DUT research-related policies and codes of conduct, and adhere to aspects of this policy to avoid misconduct.

2.8 Authorship, Publication Practices, and Acknowledgements

Promoting responsible authorship and publication practices is essential to maintaining and preserving the integrity of research and scholarship. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices jointly issued by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the National Research Foundation (NRF), and Universities South Africa (USAf) outlines clear guidelines for defining the roles of authors and contributors, which all DUT researchers must follow. These guidelines ensure that credit is given where it is due, fostering a research environment characterized by integrity and ethical conduct. In this regard, the following is to be noted:

2.8.1. Author participation required:

- a) Substantial Contribution: Authors must contribute significantly to the conception, design, data acquisition, analysis, or accurate interpretation of the research.
- b) Drafting and Revising: Authors are responsible for drafting the work or critically revising it to ensure intellectual content is accurate and meaningful.
- c) Final Approval: Every author must review and approve the final version of the manuscript before submission.
- d) Accountability: Authors must agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the research

2.8.2. Authorship Credit:

- a) Recognition of Contributions: All individuals who have made significant contributions to the research must be recognized as authors. This includes substantial intellectual contributions.
- b) Avoiding Unethical Practices: It is essential to avoid unethical practices such as:
 - i) Authorship Ghosting: Omitting contributors who deserve authorship.
 - ii) Gift Authorship: Including individuals as authors who did not contribute significantly.
 - iii) Authorship Bullying: Forcing individuals, especially supervisees, to accept or relinquish authorship.

2.8.3. Integrity and Transparency:

- a) Ethical Standards: Authors must maintain high standards of ethics and integrity throughout the research process, including the writing and submission stages.
- b) Transparent Reporting: Researchers should ensure that data and results are reported transparently, without manipulation or misrepresentation.
- c) Proper Acknowledgment: All contributors, including those who do not meet authorship criteria but provided material support (e.g., funders, indigenous knowledge holders, manuscript editors), should be properly acknowledged.
- d) Avoiding Research Misconduct: Researchers must avoid any form of research misconduct,

including data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism.

2.8.4. Ethical Publishing Practices:

- a) Adherence: Adhere to the required Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices as outlined in this policy.
- b) Avoiding Misconduct: Understand and avoid research misconduct and breaches of integrity.
- c) Responsible Publishing: Promote responsible approaches to scholarly publishing.

2.8.5. Ethical Publishing Practices:

- a) Adherence to Ethical Guidelines: Researchers must adhere to ethical research and scholarly publishing practices as outlined by institutional and disciplinary policies.
- b) Avoiding Predatory Journals: Authors are responsible for ensuring that their research is published in credible, authentic journals and should avoid predatory journals and unethical editorial practices.
- c) Independent Editorial Processes: If a researcher submits work to a journal where they have a conflict of interest such as that they are the editor, serve on the editorial board, or have acted as a peer reviewer for the publication before, the editorial process must be independent to avoid conflicts of interest.
- d) Quality over Quantity: Researchers should prioritize publishing in high-quality, high-impact journals and avoid "salami slicing" research outputs to increase publication numbers.

2.8.6. Social Awareness and Responsibility

- a) Impact on Society: Researchers and institutions must consider the potential societal impact of their research, especially on marginalized groups, and aim to minimize any negative effects.
- b) Weighing Research Benefits: Researchers must balance the benefits of their work against any potential harm and strive to conduct socially responsible research.

2.8.7. Conflicts of Interest

- a) Declaration and Management: Any potential conflicts of interest, whether financial, personal, or professional, must be declared by the researchers. Where possible, these conflicts should be avoided to maintain the integrity of the research.

2.8.8. Peer Review Process

- a) Qualified Reviewers: Peer reviewers must be sufficiently qualified to review the work, ensuring a fair, objective, and rigorous process.
- b) Anonymity and Confidentiality: The peer review process should respect the anonymity and confidentiality of both reviewers and authors, where applicable.
- c) Clear Peer-Review Policies: Researchers should satisfy themselves that research publishers and funders follow transparent peer-review policies in the review process.

2.8.9. Research Publishing Environment

- a) Ethical Research Environment: Institutions must foster an environment that encourages ethical research practices through education, clear policies, and fair practices.

- b) Avoiding Incentivization of Unethical Practices: Care should be taken to ensure that research funding and incentives do not promote unethical practices that could compromise research integrity.

2.9 Conflict of Interest

The DUT research community adheres to a stringent policy requiring the full disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest. This policy is designed to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of research conducted under the institution's name, thereby safeguarding its reputation. To achieve this, the following is to be noted:

2.9.1. Disclosure Requirements:

- a) Researchers must disclose any professional, contractual, personal, financial, and other conflicts of interest.
- b) This includes relationships or interests that could reasonably be perceived as creating a conflict of interest or affecting the research.

2.9.2. Examples of types of Relationships and Interests to be Disclosed:

- a) Personal relationships;
- b) Relationships to the research study;
- c) Business relationships or affiliations; and
- d) Financial interests in research proposals, review processes, publications, and official correspondences.

2.10 Research Misconduct

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) recognises that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) requires that all higher education institutions be committed to upholding responsible conduct in research. Research misconduct, which encompasses all unethical practices affecting research, publishing, and academia, is to be vigorously avoided in research. Instances of misconduct are to be comprehensively addressed when they become evident to maintain the integrity of the higher education system. In this regard, the following is to be noted:

2.10.1. Examples of Research Misconduct include:

- a) Fabrication and falsification of data and research results;
- b) Plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research;
- c) Deviating from or failing to adhere to the approved research proposal without prior FRC and IREC approval;
- d) Misrepresentation and falsification of researcher credentials;
- e) Deception in carrying out research;
- f) Piracy of research materials;
- g) Failure to obtain required informed consent; and
- h) Breach of confidentiality.

2.10.2. Management of Research Misconduct:

- a) Incidents of research misconduct will be managed according to the university's disciplinary procedures, as specified in the DUT Policy on Institutional Code of Ethics.
- b) University stakeholders are obliged to report all incidences of research misconduct that they become aware of, and specific reference to the DUT Whistleblowing Policy is noted.

2.11 Peer-Review Process

The essence of the peer review process builds around the concepts of honesty and trustworthiness in data capturing and reporting. In every research work submitted, be it a thesis, dissertation, journal paper, article, or short piece, adhering to integrity in these processes is vital for the dictate of honesty and trust in research and data reporting. Peer review, therefore, ties in with authorship integrity and practices, in the sense that dishonesty in reports, data, or results submitted for a peer review process undermines not only the research itself but also the integrity of the researcher and the researcher's affiliate institution as well. The peer review process must be thorough, with reviewers adhering to ethical guidelines that prevent bias and ensure objective assessment. In light of this, reviewers are to adhere to the following aspects:

- a) Confidentiality: Reviewers must maintain strict confidentiality about the research and its contents. The information should not be disclosed to anyone outside the review process or used for personal advantage.
- b) Impartiality: Reviews should be conducted impartially and without bias. Reviewers must base their evaluations solely on the research's merits and its adherence to academic standards, not on personal or professional conflicts of interest.
- c) Constructive Feedback: Reviewers should provide constructive, clear, and actionable feedback to help authors improve their work. Criticism should be respectful and aimed at enhancing the quality of the research.
- d) Expertise: Reviewers should have the appropriate expertise and knowledge in the relevant field to evaluate the research effectively. They must be capable of assessing the validity and significance of the research findings.
- e) Timeliness: Reviews should be completed within the agreed-upon timeframe to ensure a prompt decision on the manuscript. Timely reviews are essential for maintaining the efficiency of the publication process.
- f) Ethical Considerations: Reviewers must be vigilant about ethical issues, including ensuring that the research complies with ethical standards for human and animal subjects and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest.
- g) Transparency: Any potential conflicts of interest or biases should be disclosed to the reviewing body. Reviewers should also clearly state their reasons for accepting or rejecting a manuscript.
- h) Respect for Intellectual Property: Reviewers should respect the intellectual property rights of the authors and avoid using any unpublished information from the manuscript for their own research or gain.

3. AUTHORSHIP

This section of the policy outlines the criteria and processes for authorship attribution, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability. It reflects our dedication to not only advancing knowledge but also nurturing a collaborative and equitable academic environment.

3.1 Principles for Judging Eligibility for Authorship

The principles outlined for judging authorship eligibility are to ensure that authorship is attributed fairly and transparently in research and scholarly activities. These requirements aim to uphold the integrity of the research process by recognizing substantial intellectual contributions, maintaining accountability, and adhering to ethical standards. Proper implementation of these principles fosters trust, credibility, and collaboration within the research community. Attributing Authorship is to be defined by the following principles:

- a) Accurately Acknowledge Substantial Contribution: Clearly outline what constitutes a substantial intellectual contribution to ensure that only those who have actively and meaningfully engaged in the research are considered for authorship. Factors that determine this typically include intellectual input in the conception, design, execution, analysis, interpretation, or writing of the work.
- b) Establish Transparency: The research team is to Document and communicate all contributions and responsibilities among team members to ensure transparency in the authorship process.
- c) Ensure Accountability: Hold authors accountable for the accuracy, integrity, ethical conduct and individual contributions of the research and its findings.
- d) Promote Fairness: Allocate authorship based on relative contributions, avoiding bias, favouritism, or undue influence.
- e) Facilitate Consensus: Ensure that authorship decisions, including the order of authors, are made through consensus among co-authors.
- f) Adhere to Ethical Standards: Comply with institutional and international best practices, including adherence to other aspects of this policy and relevant ethical codes.
- g) Acknowledge Contributions: Properly acknowledge individuals who have contributed to the research but do not meet the authorship criteria.
- h) Prevent Token Authorship: Avoid granting authorship as a courtesy; it should be based on substantial contributions.
- i) Avoid Ghost Authorship: Ensure that only individuals who have made substantial contributions are included as authors.

3.2 Order of Authors

The order of authors in a publication should reflect their relative contributions to the work, with the most substantial contributors listed first. The order should be determined collaboratively among the authors, considering the significance of each individual's contribution. The following should be adhered to:

- 3.2.1. The determination of contributions should be made according to the individual piece of work being disseminated and not according to any research consortium or team from which the piece of work is associated or a pre-existing relationship between authors (such as supervisor/student).
- 3.2.2. In research teams that include members beyond DUT a negotiated, position should be taken and agreed upon at the onset of the research project. DUT researchers should not support or condone exploitative practices when it comes to the order of authors and our institutional values and principles should take precedence.
- 3.2.3. Where all those engaged in the research project are affiliated with DUT or if a DUT-affiliated researcher is the principal researcher, the order must reflect the relative contributions of the researchers and may not be negotiated to be different.
- 3.2.4. In the case where research was concluded at one institution, (including research related to the award

of qualifications, such as, but not limited to, Master's or Doctoral studies), and researchers wish to pursue further publication at another institution utilising data or information notably generated as part of the research concluded at the original institution, the following applies:

- a) Individual/s are to obtain approval from the original institution before continuing to use the data or information.
- b) The intended use of the data or information generated needs to be properly outlined and adhered to.
- c) Depending on the quantum of information used, an appropriate acknowledgement or dual researcher affiliation may need to be agreed upon.
- d) This applies to researchers subsequently affiliating with DUT or those initially affiliated with DUT and now at another institution.

3.2.5. The corresponding author is responsible for communication with publishers, journals, and other stakeholders. The corresponding author should be clearly identified and may not necessarily be the first author.

3.3 Responsibilities of Authors and Contributors

3.3.1. Authors Responsibilities: Authors have the following responsibilities:

- a) Substantial Contribution: Ensure that they have made a substantial intellectual or creative contribution to the work.
- b) Ethical Conduct: Ensure the research or scholarly work is conducted with transparency, honesty, integrity, and compliance with ethical guidelines and applicable laws.
- c) Review and Approval: Review and approve the final version of the work for publication.
- d) Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest: Disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may affect the integrity or objectivity of the work.

3.3.2. Contributors have the responsibility to acknowledge their contributions accurately and transparently. They should not be listed as authors if they do not meet the authorship criteria.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

3.4.1. Authors are expected to adhere to this Policy.

3.4.2. Authors must adhere to ethical standards in research and publication, including avoiding ghost authorship and gift authorship.

3.4.3. All authors should have reviewed and approved the final version of any manuscript/research finding dissemination.

3.4.4. Violations may result in disciplinary hearings as per the DUT policies. Individuals who assert authorship claims, which, if deemed unethical under DUT policies, may face allegations of academic misconduct as outlined in DUT's disciplinary procedures applicable to both students and employees.

4. RESEARCH ETHICS

The section on research ethics is based on widely accepted principles and practices governing research. The key

elements are:

- a) Minimal risk of harm to participants and researchers;
- b) Potential for benefit by society;
- c) Maintenance of the dignity of participants;
- d) Minimal risk of harm to the environment;
- e) Voluntary informed consent by participants, or special safeguards where this is not possible;
- f) Transparency in declaring funding sources;
- g) Confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents;
- h) Acknowledgement of assistance;
- i) Appropriate publication and dissemination of research results; and
- j) Independence and impartiality of researchers.

4.1 Review Process

- 4.1.1. Any proposal that conceivably may have an impact on humans, animals or the environment must have ethical approval, the level of approval is determined in a case-by-case manner. This includes physical samples and materials being acquired, stored, and disposed of, even if only used in a laboratory setting.
- 4.1.2. IREC independently reviews research proposals referred to it by the Faculty Research Committee (FRC); Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FREC) and other DUT environments (e.g. support and administration environments).
- 4.1.3. IREC also independently reviews research proposals that have been submitted by non-DUT researchers for projects in the DUT environment.
- 4.1.4. Where research proposals involve minimal risk research, the proposals are reviewed by the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), which is a standing sub-committee of the IREC for evaluation and approval. IREC will conduct quality checks and be responsible for the issuing of letters of consent.
- 4.1.5. All ethical clearance certificates are valid for one year only and need to be renewed annually through IREC.

4.2 Compliance with Ethical Clearance

- 4.2.1. Researchers, including students, may not commence with primary data collection or interaction with research participants or the research environment until the ethical clearance is formally given by IREC.
- 4.2.2. Researchers may not continue with data collection or interaction with research participants or the research environment with lapsed ethical clearance. Merely applying for renewal is insufficient to allow for continuation of investigations or interactions, formal notification of approved renewal is required.
- 4.2.3. Ethical violations, including, but not limited to, failure to obtain ethical clearance, conducting research without current ethical clearance, and other breaches as outlined in this policy, may lead to severe consequences, such as, but not limited to:

- a) Suspension or termination of the research project.
- b) Withholding of research outputs from publication or dissemination.
- c) Referral for criminal prosecution if violations breach national or international laws.
- d) Loss of accreditation for the involved researcher or academic unit.
- e) Financial penalties, including revocation of funding and ineligibility for future grants.
- f) Exclusion from opportunities to commercialize intellectual property resulting from the research.
- g) Additional disciplinary actions as specified in the university's research integrity and ethics policies.

4.3 Rules of Faculty Research Ethics Committees

- 4.3.1. FRECs are standing subcommittees of IREC and hence the Chairperson of the FREC must be a member of IREC.
- 4.3.2. All proposals given ethics approval at FRECs must be submitted to IREC for quality check and issuing of an Ethical Clearance number.
- 4.3.3. The FRECs review research proposals in the context of their respective faculty. Where proposals involve any of the following aspects the proposals must (mandatory) be referred to IREC for review and approval:
 - a) Clinical trials;
 - b) Human genetic research (especially if it involves somatic/germ cell therapy, genetic manipulation, genetic screening, genetic fingerprinting or storage of blood or other tissue samples for future genetic studies);
 - c) Research that involves HIV studies; and
 - d) Research that involves vulnerable participants.

4.4 Human Related Research

- 4.4.1. All human-related research which includes one or more of the following requires ethical assessment and approval at the appropriate level:
 - a) Direct involvement through physically invasive procedures, such as the taking of blood samples;
 - b) Direct involvement through non-invasive procedures, such as laboratory-based experiments, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and observation.
 - c) Indirect involvement through access to personal information and/or tissue;
 - d) Involvement requiring consent on behalf of others, such as by parents for a child participant; and
 - e) Vulnerable Participants.
- 4.4.2. Some participants may be particularly vulnerable to harm and may require special safeguards for their

welfare. These individuals are research participants where there is particular concern about autonomy or respect for persons, fairness of participant recruitment and the distribution of research burdens and benefits, and the potential compromised ability to fully consent to participate in a study. Though impractical to comprehensively list particularly vulnerable participants as the context and individual circumstances dictate this, examples include:

- a) Pregnant women, fetuses, infants, minors and the aged;
- b) Students;
- c) People with physiological and/or psychological impairments and/or learning difficulties;
- d) People living in poverty;
- e) Relatives of sick or recently-deceased people;
- f) People with only a basic/elementary knowledge of the language of the researcher;
- g) Prisoners;
- h) People with serious health conditions; and
- i) Victims of abuse or trauma.

4.4.3. In general, it is usually inappropriate for undergraduates to undertake research projects involving vulnerable participants.

4.5 Legal Framework, Professional Associations and Research Councils

4.5.1. All research undertaken under the auspices of the Durban University of Technology must meet statutory requirements. Of particular relevance is certain South African legislation (e.g. Child Act, National Health Act), Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (Department of Health, South Africa).

4.5.2. Researchers in particular disciplines/professions should comply with any research ethics guidelines set out by their professional associations.

4.5.3. It is to be noted that some research councils, charitable trusts and other research funding bodies require an undertaking from grant applicants that research proposals involving human participants have been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee or another appropriate body. Some also require audited compliance with their guidelines. Researchers are to comply with all requirements of relevant stakeholders related to their research.

4.5.4. Internal main supervisors must be academic/research staff members of the University in a permanent or continuing fixed-term role who are either:

- a) Classified as research/innovation-focused or academic specialists;
- b) Staff members with active participation in original research, innovation and active publishers or researchers as determined relevant by the University;
- c) Honorary/adjunct fellows who have active participation in original research, and innovation and are actively publishing; or

4.5.5. Clinical/industrial/technical honorary fellows who are active and participating in original research and innovation.

5. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In the academic and research community, disputes are not uncommon and can significantly impact the integrity of research and collaboration. Recognizing the need for effective and fair resolution mechanisms, DUT has established a comprehensive framework to address such disputes. This framework outlines a step-by-step approach, ranging from informal resolution methods to formal university-level procedures. By ensuring that disputes are addressed through clear, structured processes, DUT aims to uphold the principles of fairness, accountability, and ethical conduct in research and academic collaborations. This document provides detailed mechanisms for resolving authorship disputes, including the roles and responsibilities of various parties involved at different levels of escalation.

5.1 Informal Resolution

The parties involved in a dispute should first engage in the following:

- 5.1.1. Engage in open and constructive communication among the parties involved in the authorship dispute. Research leaders, researchers, departments, and faculties should facilitate discussions to resolve the dispute informally.
- 5.1.2. Consider engaging a neutral third party, such as a faculty head or department chair, to mediate the dispute. The mediator can help facilitate discussions, clarify misunderstandings, and guide the parties toward a mutually acceptable resolution.

5.2 Department Level Resolution

If an informal resolution is not successful, the dispute is to be escalated formally to the department level. The following action is to be taken:

- 5.2.1 The head of a department, in collaboration with relevant faculty leadership, can mediate the dispute and seek a resolution that aligns with university policies and practices. If the HoD is a party involved in the dispute, a HoD from another department in the faculty is to be appointed by the DRC chair.
- 5.2.2 Should formal mediation not resolve the dispute, departments must establish an ad-hoc peer review committee consisting of experienced faculty members. This committee must convene to assess disputes and provide recommendations for resolution.
- 5.2.3 If gross violation is found, the matter should be referred to the Chief Risk Officer for processing according to DUT-related policies.

5.3 Faculty Level Resolution

If the dispute remains unresolved at the department level, it can be escalated to the faculty level. This will require the following:

- 5.3.1 The Faculty Research Committee (FRC) should convene a special ad-hoc committee, comprising experienced researchers and research leaders to review the dispute and make recommendations for resolution. This committee must be chaired by the Executive Dean/ FRC chair unless he or she is conflicted on the matter and in such case, the Deputy Dean will chair.
- 5.3.2 The Faculty Dean may become involved in facilitating discussions and ensuring that the dispute-resolution process is conducted in a fair and unbiased manner.
- 5.3.3 The Executive Dean must report any dispute that escalates to a faculty-level dispute any case to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement.
- 5.3.4 If gross violation is found, the matter should be referred to the Chief Risk Officer for processing

according to DUT-related policies.

5.4 Research Unit Resolution

In instances where a dispute arises in a unit as opposed to an academic department, the following is to be followed:

- 5.4.1 The head of the unit, in collaboration with relevant unit leadership, can mediate the dispute and seek a resolution that aligns with university policies and practices.
- 5.4.2 Should formal mediation not resolve the dispute, units must establish an ad-hoc peer review committee consisting of experienced university members. This committee must convene to assess disputes and provide recommendations for resolution.
- 5.4.3 If gross violation is found, the matter should be referred to the Chief Risk Officer for processing according to DUT-related policies.

5.5 Dispute Resolution Appeals Process

- 5.5.1 In cases where disputes cannot be resolved at the unit or faculty level and a party wishes to appeal the decision of the committee, the matter is to be referred to the DVC: RIE's office.
- 5.5.2 The DVC: RIE is to set up an appeals committee of experienced leaders across the university and/or appoint an external expert/s.
- 5.5.3 This committee can review the dispute and make a final determination. The Appeals Committee informs the DVC: RIE of its findings before it is shared with the complainants.
- 5.5.4 In situations where disputes involve ethical concerns, the Institutional Research Ethics Committee may be called upon to review and provide guidance on ethical considerations in the dispute resolution process.
- 5.5.5 If gross violation is found, the matter should be referred to the Chief Risk Officer for processing according to DUT-related policies.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS POLICY

6.1 Documents

- 1. Amsterdam Agenda. 5th World Conference on Research Integrity. Available at: (<https://wcrif.org/documents/42-amsterdam-agenda/file>)
- 2. Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences. International ethics guidelines for biomedical research involving human subjects.
- 3. Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Available at: (<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>)
- 4. Department of Health, Republic of South Africa:
 - a) Ethics in health research: Principles, structures and processes
 - b) Guidelines for good practice in the conduct of clinical trials with human participants in South Africa
- 5. Department of Higher Education Training (DHET) Research Output (2015). Available at: (<https://www.dhet.gov.za/Policy%20and%20Development%20Support/Research%20Outputs%20policy%20gazette%202015.pdf>)
- 6. Durban University of Technology:

- a) Composition and Terms of Reference of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. Available at: (<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Research-Ethics-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>)
- b) ENVISION2030 Strategy Map Interpretation Guide. Available at: (<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Envision-2030-strategy-map.pdf>)
- c) Guidelines for Research Data Storage. Available at: (<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/research/institutional%20research%20ethics/Guidelines%20for%20research%20data%20storage.pdf>)
- d) Research Ethics Policy. Available at: (<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Research-Ethics-Policy-.pdf>)
- e) Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees. Available at: (<https://dut-cdn2.azureedge.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Supervision-Policy-for-Postgraduate-Research-Degrees-Approved-by-Senate-3-September-2019.pdf>)
7. Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa): Research Code
8. Medical Research Council (South Africa) Guidelines on Ethics for Medical Research: Booklet series:
 - a) General Principles
 - b) HIV Vaccine Trials
 - c) Reproductive Biology and Genetic Research
 - d) Use of Animals in Research
 - e) Use of Biohazards and Radiation
9. Moher D, Bouter L, Kleinert S, Glasziou P, Sham MH, Barbour V, et al. (2020). The Hong Kong Principles for assessing researchers: Fostering research integrity. PLoS Biol 18(7): e3000737. Available at: (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000737>)
10. Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations. Available at: (<https://wcrif.org/documents/354-montreal-statement-english/file>)
11. National Institute of Health (2018). What is Research Integrity. Available at: (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office/research-integrity/what-is-research-integrity>)
12. POPIA Code of Conduct for Research (2021). Available at: (<http://www.dgmc.co.za/ContentClinical/images/pdf/10933-Main%20document-67254-1-10-20210502.pdf>)
13. Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010). Available at: (<https://wcrif.org/documents/327-singapore-statement-a4size/file>)
14. Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices, jointly issued by ASSAf, CHE, DHET, NRF, and USAf. Available at: (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/LinkedDocuments/NRF%20Ethical%20Publication%20Statements.pdf>)
15. The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017). Available at: (<https://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017.pdf>)
16. TUTU and Greenwich University Research Ethics Policies
17. World Medical Association. Declaration of Helsinki

6.2 Acknowledgements

Special acknowledgements to TUT for sharing practices on Research Ethics and Research Ethics Documents.

1. content/uploads/2017/08/RI-PI.pdf). Accessed: 17 July 2024.