

Policy for the Responsible Conduct of Research

Title	Responsible Conduct of Research
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Status	Policy
Approval route	EiRC/URC > SEC > Senate
Approving body	Senate
Relevant related policies, procedures and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCT Authorship Practices Policy • UCT Research Ethics Code for Research Involving Human Participants • UCT Research Ethics Code for Use of Animals in Research and Teaching, • UCT Policy for Conflicts of Interest and of Commitment in Teaching and Research • UCT Policy and Procedures for Breach of Research Ethics Codes and Allegations of Research Misconduct in Research • Policy for Avoiding Plagiarism, • Whistle-blowing for Academic Misconduct Policy • UCT Research Data Management Policy • UCT Open Access policy • RCR Training and Education (RCRTE) Standard Operating Procedure

1. Scope

- 1.1. This Policy applies to all who present their research as affiliated to UCT. This includes teaching staff, researchers and other staff members of UCT as well as students, postdoctoral fellows and research associates, honorary research associates, visiting and Emeritus scholars, UCT staff on sabbatical leave or on leave without remuneration, and adjunct staff.

2. General Principles:

- 2.1. Responsible conduct of research (RCR) is defined as "the practice of scientific investigation with integrity."¹ It involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to research.
- 2.2. In keeping with the emphasis on excellence in research, UCT has a Responsible Conduct of Research framework of policies that govern research at the university, all of which are designed to promote ethical research conduct, integrity in research and related

¹ See National Institutes of Health [Rules and Policies](#).

relationships and to provide procedures to guide decision makers or persons who wish to raise concerns.

- 2.3. The policies include the Authorship Practices Policy that requires fair, transparent, and ethical conduct regarding collaboration in research to avoid conflict; the Conflict of Interest and of Commitment in Teaching and Research Policy and Procedures that guides how to recognize and manage such conflicts; the Research Misconduct Procedures that provide clear, transparent and fair processes for dealing with allegations of research misconduct; the Policy on Avoiding Plagiarism that guides both staff and students on how to avoid this form of academic dishonesty; the Whistle-blowing Guideline that provides procedures for persons who raise a concern about possible breach of policy or code; the Research Data Management Policy that seeks to ensure consistent research practice related to data management principles that support effective data sharing, including open access; and the need for data to be discoverable, accessible, reusable and interoperable to specific quality standards; the UCT Open Access Policy for taking forward open scholarship and open education as part of a commitment to scholarly communication, e-research and digital content stewardship and the UCT Research Ethics Code for Research Involving Humans and the UCT Code for Use of Animals in Research and Teaching.
- 2.4. The university community should promote responsible research conduct, participate in relevant professional development and training to maintain currency of knowledge, treat fellow researchers fairly and with respect and promptly raise concerns regarding questionable research practices by themselves or others.
- 2.5. The promotion of responsible research is, above all, an ongoing deliberative process, in which researchers reflect and discuss in a collegial manner the challenges of responsibility.
- 2.6. UCT affirms the requirement that research involving human participants or animal use for research or teaching must undergo ethics review, according to faculty-specific guidelines that comply with UCT and relevant applicable external policy, norms and standards. Review entails approval of a research proposal by a Research Ethics or Animal Ethics Committee and appropriate ethical deliberative procedures during the course of the research, according to faculty specific guidelines. Context-specific ethical risk-based approval and deliberative processes should be developed to accommodate different research fields and environments. Such processes can accommodate ethical decision-making and approval in a devolved manner if appropriate. However, faculties must develop the means to document these processes, track applications and approval decisions and monitor quality assurance of their ethics review and approval processes. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that ethics approval of student projects is obtained, if required, and this requirement and approval adequately documented, prior to data collection.
- 2.7. Research involving secondary de-identified or coded data sets, where the researcher does not have access to identifying information; research on information in the public domain (if legally compliant with applicable privacy legislation) and observational research in public spaces where individuals do not have an expectation of privacy, generally does not require research ethics approval. However, some social media

research has ethical implications that requires researchers to act responsibly and seek advice from a REC if necessary.

- 2.8. Research involving biohazards or risks to the environment must be approved according to relevant Faculty and Institutional Biosafety Committee requirements
- 2.9. Research involving indigenous knowledge systems and South African natural living resources including bioprospecting (Plant and animal) must comply with relevant legislation. Such research may also require ethics approval as per relevant UCT ethics committee Terms of Reference (ToR) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS)
- 2.10. Researchers conducting research with or in communities should ensure that they engage communities timeously, appropriately and adequately for the duration of the study. Researchers are obligated to provide adequate feedback to communities once their research has been completed in a manner that is appropriate and upholds the broader ethical requirements of the project.
- 2.11. UCT affiliated researchers conducting research with community partners or in other countries are responsible for ensuring that such research is carried out in accordance with UCT policy. In situations where lesser standards are accepted, UCT affiliated researchers are nevertheless expected to uphold UCT policy. Local requirements for ethical review and approval of research must also be respected.
- 2.12. Three committees, the Senate Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC) the Senate Animal Ethics Committee (SAEC) and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) make and implement policy regarding research ethics, compliance and related matters for research that involves human participants, animal use or biological safety and security. Each Faculty has a Research Ethics Committee (REC) and, where appropriate, an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) and Faculty Biosafety Committee (FBC), which **review research proposals and/or ensure adequate deliberation** to ensure compliance with the highest ethical and safety standards. In some instances, review by a centralised UCT REC may be required. Where research does not involve human participants or animal use, it must also comply with ethics standards and legislation, especially those that govern the particular discipline or field, in addition to the other UCT research policies listed above.

3. Implementation

- 3.1. All UCT-based or affiliated staff, researchers and students bear responsibility for ensuring that these policies are implemented properly and are adhered to. The EiRC, SAEC and IBC have the special responsibility to receive reports, advice and queries relating to research involving human participants or animal use or biological safety respectively. The Terms of Reference for each committee outline both the scope of this responsibility and the procedures to be used.
- 3.2. The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) works collaboratively with research ethics, animal ethics and biological safety committees as well as individual researchers, under the auspices of the EiRC, SAEC and IBC, to promote responsible conduct of research and in particular to foster ethics and integrity in research.
- 3.3. The policy and procedure documents mentioned above may require revision to respond to changing circumstances and needs. All UCT-based or affiliated researchers

bear responsibility to bring deficiencies in these documents to the attention of the EIRC, SAEC, IBC or the ORI. In this way, a sound reflexive and responsive approach to responsible conduct of research can be assured.

4. Training and education

- 4.1. Ethical and responsible conduct of research is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in research. Consequently, education in the responsible and ethical conduct of research is considered essential in the preparation of academic, research staff, research ethics committee members and post-graduate students.
- 4.2. The university research community are encouraged to participate in RCR training opportunities as early as possible in their research careers, and may be specifically required to provide proof of such training to funders and other internal or external regulators.
- 4.3. Research ethics committee members also require specific training and must ensure that they make themselves available for appropriate training opportunities.
- 4.4. UCT as an institution will provide support to internal structures such as the Office for Research Integrity and the UCT Researcher Development Academy to develop and provide relevant RCR training.