

# UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

## COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

### POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

#### 1. GENERAL

- 1.1 The University of Pretoria has a research duty that has to be performed for the benefit of science and for the community the University is serving.
- 1.2 The University of Pretoria and researchers employed by the University acknowledge that research has to take place within a particular academic value system. Part of the mentioned academic value system is that the University and researchers within the University
  - 1.2.1 should always be true to the ethic principles of justice and credibility;
  - 1.2.2 have an increased research responsibility and duty when research is done involving humans, animals or the environment as subjects of the research.
- 1.3 To ensure that research takes place within the mentioned value system throughout the University, the University decided to lay down certain policy guidelines and procedures.
- 1.4 From the above it necessarily follows that the University condemns and discourages research taking place outside the mentioned academic value system.
- 1.5 To determine whether research takes place within or outside the mentioned academic value system, the University provides for a system of disclosure, pre-approval, recordkeeping, accountability and evaluation.

## **2. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH PRACTICES**

### **2.1 General**

The following Code of Conduct is applicable to all researchers at the University.

#### **2.1.1 Academic and research staff, students and research collaborators of the University**

2.1.1.1 are compelled to be intellectually honest at all times and always conduct themselves professionally;

2.1.1.2 should at all times meet the legal requirements of a specific research project or which may be affected by it;

2.1.1.3 should comply with the research ethical rules applicable within the University, Faculty and/or discipline;

2.1.1.4 should comply with the research ethical rules laid down by a particular professional body within the field supervised by that body;

2.1.1.5 should at all times refrain from any action that may be considered as research misconduct.

2.1.2 The above implies that researchers should not dishonour the confidence put in them by colleagues, research colleagues, the University or the broad community. A single researcher's misconduct has a negative impact on the good name of the University and as such has an indirect effect on the credibility of the community of researchers within the University.

## **2.2 Discipline-driven requirements**

2.2.1 The University recognises and endorses some discipline-driven ethical codes with international acknowledgement and it accepts these codes and standards as guidelines and rules for research at the University. The particular codes are available for perusal at relevant faculties/schools.

2.2.2 In addition to the international codes, the Ethics Committees in Faculties may prescribe requirements applicable to researchers and research projects within the Faculties.

## **2.3 Pre-approval**

2.3.1 Research may not be done without the prior written approval by an Ethics Committee or other constituted Committee.

2.3.2 Each Faculty has its own particular procedures to be followed in order to obtain the approval as mentioned above.

2.3.3 Each Faculty has a framework document that researchers could use to obtain the approval as mentioned above.

2.3.4 If the approval of any person involved in research is required in order to do the research, the approval needs to be obtained prior to the research. The person providing the approval should be given sufficient information to be in a position to make an informed decision.

2.3.5 No undue pressure may be put on a person to persuade him/her to participate in the research programme.

## **2.4 Recordkeeping**

Each Faculty needs to keep proper records of all approved and rejected protocols as well as of the status of the approved project.

## **2.5 Conclusion of projects**

After completion of a project researchers need to inform the relevant Ethics Committee and need to certify that the research has been completed in accordance with the approved research protocol.

## **2.6 Confidentiality**

2.6.1 All research results should generally be open to evaluation by colleagues within the University, other researchers, interested parties and the public.

2.6.2 If confidentiality is required, researchers are required to honour it. An Ethics Committee should however, provide approval prior to the start of confidential research.

2.6.3 Research information should not be used for any other purpose than it was required for or for which approval was given.

2.6.4 The University may require that research results are kept confidential for a limited period of time to enable the University to protect its intellectual property. Researchers should protect the interests of the University when it concerns intellectual property.

## **2.7 Consultation**

Should researchers doubt their authority or responsibilities or have any doubts about the ethical implications of their work, they should look for guidance from

their colleagues, co-researchers, the applicable Ethics Committee, the Dean of the Faculty or Executive Management of the University.

## **2.8 Safety**

Researchers have a duty to comply with the prescribed safety procedures.

## **3. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN RESEARCH MISCONDUCT IS ALLEGED**

### **3.1 Definitions of Research Misconduct**

3.1.1 “Research misconduct” has the following meaning: The non-compliance with the prescribed rules, procedures and prescriptions of an applicable ethics committee; research outside the stipulations of an approved research protocol; failure to obtain approval prior to the start of the research (where approval is a requirement); fabrication and falsifying of research data and results; plagiarism; failing to honour confidentiality; abuse of research funds; illegal or unauthorized use of University property when doing research; raising research funds in an improper way; transgressing the University’s rules on intellectual goods and guidelines; practices that substantively deviate from generally accepted practices within the academic research community. The latter includes failure to acknowledge work done primarily by a research student/co-researcher.

3.1.2 An honest difference in interpretation or judgement on data does not constitute research misconduct.

### **3.2 Procedures**

3.2.1 All cases of research misconduct are referred to the Chairpersons of the relevant Ethics Committee of the particular Faculty.

3.2.2 The Chairpersons of the relevant Ethics Committee, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity appoints a

- Committee of three members to investigate the misconduct in accordance with a procedure as approved by the Committee with consideration to the rules of good administrative processes. The mentioned committee reports to the Faculty Committee as well as the Chairman of the Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity.
- 3.2.3 The Faculty will take corrective action as they consider appropriate. This includes the authority to instruct the researcher to immediately cease all research.
- 3.2.4 If the Chairman of the Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity is of the opinion that the research misconduct is of such severity that it warrants disciplinary action, he/she should refer the matter to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.
- 3.2.5 The Vice-Chancellor and Principal will take the corrective action he/she deems appropriate. This includes the authority to order that disciplinary action should be taken in accordance with the University's disciplinary code and procedures against the person who, according to the Committee mentioned above, has acted unlawfully.
- 3.2.6 Nothing in the above procedures will prevent the Vice-Chancellor and Principal to use another procedure to investigate an allegation of research misconduct if he/she is of the opinion that it is desirable.

### **3.3 Reporting**

- 3.3.1 The Chairperson of the Faculty Ethics Committee reports twice annually on the activities of the particular Ethics Committee to the Faculty Council.
- 3.3.2 The Chairperson of the Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity reports twice annually to the Committee on complaints of research misconduct within the University as well as the subsequent steps taken.