

CODE for ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH ETHICS

1 PREAMBLE

The University of Johannesburg (UJ):

- in pursuit of its vision of being an international university of choice, anchored in Africa, dynamically shaping the future;
- mindful of its commitment to the sustained excellence and relevance of its comprehensive programmes and of its research; and
- recognising its obligation to nurture employees and students with integrity, who are knowledgeable, well-balanced leaders and confident global citizens and who act in keeping with the precepts of ethical academic conduct, whether in research or in teaching

in this Code expresses the ethical values expected of all employees, students and persons affiliated with the University (affiliates) in teaching and learning, research, and community engagement activities at UJ.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Code is to establish ethical norms for employees, students and affiliates in teaching and learning, research and community engagement activities, in order for them to:

- (i) respect the fundamental constitutional rights of all stakeholders with whom they engage;
- (ii) promote shared ethical values when engaged in their academic activities;
- (iii) uphold academic integrity among individuals, in groups and in the institution when engaged in teaching and learning, research and community engagement activities;
- (iv) engender trust in the institution and in its pursuits of creating, curating and dispensing with knowledge across all of its disciplines;
- (v) encourage dedicated discussion of ethical issues; and
- (vi) facilitate ethical decision-making.

3 STATUS AND CUSTODIANSHIP OF THE CODE

3.1 The Code is an integral part of the institutional rules and values of UJ.

- 3.2 The Senate Research Ethics Committee is the custodian of the Code.
- 3.3 The Code serves as the basis for the development and implementation by the Senate Research Ethics Committee of a Research Ethics policy, for the advice it gives and the oversight it provides on matters of research ethics and the appeals it considers from the decisions of faculty/college ethics committees.
- 3.4 Faculty/college ethics committees are responsible for the implementation of and compliance with the Code in the identification, evaluation and treatment of all ethical matters arising from faculty/college-based teaching and learning, research, and community engagement activities. Each ethics committee is accountable to the relevant Faculty/College Board for its performance and the execution of its duties.
- 3.5 All academic and academic support employees upon assumption of their duties at UJ, all students upon preregistration, registration and re-registration and all affiliates upon appointment are provided with a copy of this Code and must agree to be subject to it. Affiliates are persons other than employees or students who qualify that their research output (whether any has been produced) is measured and evaluated in terms of policy published in term of the Higher Education Act, 1997. Visiting academics such as guest lecturers are regarded as affiliates.
- 3.6 The Code embodies a continuous commitment to quality assurance. As such, it must be interpreted within the context of all quality-assurance policies and guidelines of relevant quality-related Senate and faculty/college-based committees.
- 3.7 The scope and spirit of the Code serve as the normative basis for the interpretation of all matters of an ethical nature related to teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. As such, all faculty-based policies and codes must be aligned with the Code.
- 3.8 The Code may be augmented from time to time to provide a normative basis for ethical matters related to teaching and learning, research and community engagement.
- 3.9 Conduct in conflict with the provisions of this Code may constitute academic misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action against an employee in terms of the *Disciplinary Code and Procedure* and against a student in terms of the *Regulations for Student Discipline* and the *UJ Student Regulations*, among the prevailing policies and regulations of UJ.

4 SCOPE OF THE CODE

- 4.1 The code applies to all persons affiliated to UJ. These include:

- employees;
- postdoctoral research fellows (PDRFs);
- undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- research affiliates;
- visiting academics; and
- community engagement research collaborators.

5 VALUES

5.1 The Code is embedded within and therefore reflects the core values of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* and of the letter and the spirit of the laws of the country.

5.2 **Human rights.** The recognition and protection of human rights have a direct bearing on teaching and learning, research, and community engagement activities. The following rights recognised and protected in the Bill of Rights of the *Constitution* are of relevance:

- the right to equality and non-discrimination (section 9);
- the right to human dignity (section 10);
- the right to life (section 11);
- the right to freedom and security of the person (section 12);
- the right to privacy (section 14);
- the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion (section 15);
- the right to freedom of expression (section 16);
- the right to a sustainable and protected environment (section 24);
- the right of access to information (section 32);
- the right to just administrative action (section 33); and
- the right to equality before the law

4.3 **Fundamental values of academic activities.** Teaching and learning, research and community engagement activities are undertaken in accordance with the following fundamental values:

- the pursuit of truth and justice through free inquiry and open dialogue;

- the optimum development of human potential through intellectual expertise;
- a commitment to academic excellence; and
- just and fair treatment of human beings, other living beings, human remains and the environment.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF, STUDENTS AND AFFILIATES

5.1 **Accurate information.** Employees, students, and affiliates of UJ are transparent in the provision of accurate and sufficiently detailed information to students, academic and academic support peers, administrative staff, management staff and other stakeholders who are dependent on such information for the exercise of their responsibilities, in accordance with generally accepted academic and scientific practice and with relevant legislation governing access to information.

5.2 **Competence and expertise.** In acknowledgment of the dependence of many recipients, stakeholders, and sectors in the community on the competence of staff, students, and fellows in:

- designing and teaching modules;
- generating, executing and presenting research;
- providing expertise to stakeholders,

such competence and expertise is optimally, cohesively and responsibly developed and employed.

5.3 **Development of human potential.** Employees, students, and fellows have the responsibility to recognize, respect and develop the human potential of others by, among others:

- providing state-of-the-art module and curriculum content;
- using the best available and most appropriate teaching and learning methods;
- producing and researching high-quality research; and
- complying with generally accepted ethical standards to promote the well-being and dignity of, and to avoid harm and impairment to people and all living beings.

5.4 **Giving credit.** Employees, students, and fellows are just and fair in giving appropriate credit to others for their performance, contributions, and achievements, be it in:

- the evaluation of students' work;
- peer review of colleagues' work;
- their own research;
- recommendations on promotion, funding, awards, and prizes and commendations;
- decisions on the recognition of merit and contributions made in published research including authorship; and
- appraisal of character and performance.

5.5 **Power.** Teaching and learning, research, community engagement, mentoring, supervision, and management involve relationships of authority generated by, among others, expertise, experience, excellence, and position seniority. Such authority power is exercised with due recognition of the rights of others.

5.6 **Well-being.** Employees, students, and fellows accept responsibility for complying with due diligence measures regarding their personal well-being to provide quality service in executing their teaching and learning, research and community engagement responsibilities with optimal effectiveness and efficiency.

6 SUPPORTING CODES

Employees, students, and affiliates acknowledge and subscribe to other prevailing and relevant codes of ethics relevant to their academic work and to relevant professional codes of conduct. These include international codes of ethics agreed to by regional and global organisations and codes of ethics adopted by national and international academic organisations.

7 APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

7.1 The design, method and methodology of research undertaken by employees, students and affiliates that involves human participants, human remains, other living beings and the environment, must be submitted to a faculty/college committee for consideration of academic ethics. This research must be evaluated and approved by the committee, taking due cognisance of relevant legislation and the rules of professional councils or institutions governing such research before the research is undertaken.

7.2 Masters and doctoral students who make research submissions to faculty boards or committees and research submissions to supervisors must affirm in writing that due consideration will be given to reasonably foreseeable ethical implications of the proposed research and appropriately addressed in the research.

7.3 Students, upon submitting research essays, minor dissertations, dissertations, and theses, must declare in writing that their research complies with the Code and, where applicable, the code of ethics of the relevant faculty.

8 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

8.1 Employees, students and affiliates maintain the highest degree of academic integrity in their teaching and learning, research and community engagement activities. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

8.2 The five fundamental values of academic integrity are taken to be:¹

- honesty,
- trust,
- fairness,
- respect and
- responsibility.

8.3 Academic integrity is maintained through:

- (i) compliance with the highest standards of academic research;
- (ii) act with due diligence in choosing publishing mechanisms including journals and conferences that reflect academic integrity and uphold the reputation of the University;
- (iii) acknowledgement and accurate reflection of the limitations of research methodology and findings;
- (iv) making no misrepresentations in the dissemination of research information, data and findings;
- (v) refraining from using “ghost-writing” services and representing the work of such services as one’s own and from representing, passing off or reproducing another’s work as one’s own (“copying”), even with the consent of that other person.
- (vi) not fabricating academic research through the invention of data and results and recording or reporting them; resulting in irreproducible research;

¹ See <https://www.academicintegrity.org/fundamental-values/>

- (vii) not falsifying academic research through manipulation, change or omission of data or results of research material, equipment, or processes, resulting in inaccurate representation of research;²
- (vii) designating the authorship of consulted research sources clearly, accurately and fairly;
- (viii) assigning authorship of research publications accurately and fairly, with due consideration of the provisions of the UJ *Policy on Authorship*;
- (x) neither practicing nor promoting any form of constitutionally proscribed unfair discrimination in research;
- (xi) not committing plagiarism or self-plagiarism (on which, see 8.4-8.9); and
- (xi) applying due diligence and responsible custodianship regarding the use of UJ resources including external and internal funding.

8.4 Plagiarism, as defined in section 4 of the UJ *Policy on Plagiarism*, occurs when a person wrongly represents, passes off or reproduces someone else's words, phrases, concepts, ideas, data, or other work ("intellectual output"), whether written, visual or oral, as their own original intellectual work, without adequately acknowledging the original author or source by means of the recognised referencing methods of the relevant discipline. Section 4 [note: check to verify this section number] of the *Policy on Plagiarism* provides further details on what constitutes plagiarism.

8.5 Self-plagiarism, as defined in section 4 of the *Policy on Plagiarism* [check & verify this section number], occurs when a person represents, passes off or reproduces their own work previously submitted for assessment or published as new or original work without declaring that fact.

8.6 In the case of an employee or an affiliate, "work" includes professional work (such as curricula vitae, portfolios, cover letters, vision, and mission statements), academic work (such as learning guides, lecture notes and handouts) and research (such as research publications, books, chapters in books and conference proceedings).

8.7 Employees, students and fellows have responsibilities to combat plagiarism as detailed in section 5 [check and verify this section number] of the *Policy on Plagiarism*.

8.8 Instances where students are alleged to have committed plagiarism are dealt with in accordance with section 6 of the *Policy on Plagiarism*.

² On "fabrication" and "falsification" of research data see Office of Research Integrity, USA: <https://ori.hhs.gov/definition-misconduct>).

- 8.9 Cases of alleged plagiarism by employees and fellows are regarded as instances of misconduct subject to possible disciplinary action as provided for in 3.9.

9 COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

- 9.1 Data or information for a research project must be gathered or recorded in such a way that it can be made available to any interested party at any time upon completion of the project without violating anonymity or undermining confidentiality.
- 9.2 In exercising their rights to academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, employees, students, and affiliates are accountable to the affected community the way those rights are exercised.
- 9.3 Employees, students and affiliates must judiciously consider the potentially destructive consequences of their research activities, outcomes, or outputs on the human and natural environments and either avoid such research activities or make a concerted effort in their research activities to reduce the risk of such consequences.
- 9.4 Employees, students and affiliates must promote the open flow and free exchange of science and scholarship in their research activities, except where commercially confidential research, or the safeguarding of intellectual property, or the protection of patent rights requiring a temporary restriction on the free flow of information and legal protection has been secured by UJ, or in cases of large-scale science projects that have embargoes as part of the agreement of participation by UJ.

10 RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDERS

- 10.1 The methods, contents and results of research which has been funded (wholly or in part) by external funders must be fully disclosed in study records, progress and final reports or other outputs as per the funding agreement and stored in the university research data storage platform. Full particulars of the external funder must be provided in the published results of the research.
- 10.2 Employees, students and affiliates must exhibit academic integrity in their engagement with potential or actual funders, with respect to their qualifications, expertise, and skills. They must ensure that funders do not set requirements for the conduct of the research that is contrary to internationally recognized standards of ethical research.
- 10.3 Employees, students and affiliates must use external funding only for the purposes explicitly approved by the funder.

11 RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH OBJECTS

- 11.1 Employees, students and affiliates must always respect the rights of research participants to freedom, dignity, privacy (including the right to anonymity) and bodily and psychological integrity.
- 11.2 Research partners and associates may be used as research participants only if they have given their written and informed consent to be a participant in a research project or, in the case of persons younger than 18 years (or younger if required by specific legislation), if their guardians have given such written and informed consent. Where written consent cannot be obtained and permission for the use of such data has been considered and approved through the Ethics approval structures this might be allowed.
- 11.3 Employees, students and affiliates must treat non-human living beings with care, respect, and an awareness of their vulnerability.
- 11.4 Employees, students and affiliates must undertake research in a manner which does not harm or pollute the environment.

12 RESEARCH DATA STORAGE

- 12.1 The principles outlined in the UJ Research Data Management Policy must be adhered to.
- 12.2 Data must be stored in the institutional research data management platform managed by the Library.

13 MEDIATION

- 13.1 In the event that a person disputes an accusation of academic misconduct made against them for violation of the provisions of this Code, that person may elect to have the dispute submitted to mediation. Such mediation takes place prior to a decision whether disciplinary action should be taken against that person.
- 13.2 A person who elects to submit a dispute to mediation informs the relevant Executive Dean or, where appropriate, Executive Director, in writing of their intention to do so.
- 13.3 The Executive Dean (Executive Director) appoints a committee of at least three senior academic employees to investigate the dispute and appoints one of them to chair the committee. The Executive Dean (Executive Director) may elect to chair the committee.

- 13.4 The committee investigates the dispute in the manner it deems fit. At a minimum, the committee must interview the complainant and the accuser and peruse any documentation presented to it.
- 13.5 Upon completion of the investigation, the committee compiles a written report to the Executive Dean (Executive Director) in which it advises them whether in their opinion academic misconduct has been committed and, if so, what appropriate action, including disciplinary action, should be taken.
- 13.6 Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the committee's report and recommendations, they may appeal in writing to either the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation, whose decision on the matter is final.