

THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

POLICY ON RESEARCH CONDUCT AND INTEGRITY

Preamble

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) is committed to pursuing excellence in research and the advancement of knowledge, in accordance with the highest standards of integrity. It recognizes that adherence to a code of professional conduct of research by its members is fundamental to building a foundation of trust between colleagues, collaborators, sponsors and the society at large.

This Policy on Research Conduct and Integrity (“Policy”) is part of a larger process and is in line with the intrinsic core values and principles of our academic enterprise laid out in ‘A Framework on Academic Integrity (1995, HKUST Senate)’ (this document is now renamed as ‘Procedural Framework Governing Violations of Academic Integrity’) (the Framework), which states that the *“maintenance of high academic integrity is essential to every aspect of the academic purpose: quality research and education, mutual trust among colleagues, building nurturing relationships with our students, etc.”*.

Thus, all researchers must observe the highest standards of professional conduct and adhere to the following principles and responsibilities:

- honesty, rigor and integrity;
- objectivity and accuracy;
- accountability and the duty of care; and
- respect for life and the public good.

1. Purpose

To specify the University’s research governance and its expectations of the professional responsibilities and integrity of its researchers. The Policy is based on the typical standards and policies practiced in top research universities worldwide.

2. Personnel Covered

This Policy applies to all faculty, staff and students, as well as visiting researchers and affiliated researchers, in regard to research or scholarly inquiry undertaken at or on behalf of the University, regardless of the funding source.

3. Good Research Practices

The following guidelines lay down general principles, which form the norm of good research practice that underpin the University's expectation on the research conduct of all members of its community.

3.1 Data Collection, Management, Access and Ownership

Research data must be collected, recorded, used, and published in compliance with data privacy and ethical practices (see relevant [resources](#) and [procedures to seek ethical approval](#)). Data ownership rights must be respected. Personal data must be used in compliance with the laws of Hong Kong, including the [Personal Data \(Privacy\) Ordinance](#), as well as the University's [relevant statements and guidelines](#).

3.2 Authorship

All persons listed as an author or co-author must consent to be included as such and should have made a significant intellectual or practical contribution towards the work. All authors in a group effort shall have a shared responsibility for the published result.

3.3 Training

The University's designated training program on research integrity is [mandatory](#) for specified faculty, staff and students, as well as a prerequisite for research projects, including research grants and contract research. As part of their overall career and professional development, researchers are encouraged also to attend other relevant training to adopt best practices in research.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The University – will do its best to foster a conducive environment to stimulate scientific and research excellence, and put in place policies and measures, including training where appropriate, to encourage and guide the attainment of high standards of integrity in research among its members.

4.2 The Researcher – each member of the University research community is expected to be fully familiar with and to observe this Policy to assure the proper conduct of research and to uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity when conducting research work. All faculty, staff and students involved in research activities should undertake [training](#) provided by the University in the responsible conduct of research, including ethics. The Principal Investigator should ensure that all team members have completed this training before engaging in research.

4.3 The Community – members of the University community should report all suspected acts of misconduct or improper activities in research promptly upon becoming aware of them.

5. Research Integrity and Misconduct

Violations of research integrity are acts of DISHONESTY, EXPLOITATION, ABUSE or contravention of good practice. Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

5.1 Fabrication – making up data, results or other aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and recording or reporting them.

5.2 Falsification – inappropriate manipulation of research materials, equipment or processes, or deliberately changing or omitting relevant findings of a data set from analysis, such that the research is not accurately represented.

5.3 Plagiarism – copying of ideas, data, text or results and presenting these as one’s own without permission or adequate acknowledgement of the intellectual property of the authors.

5.4 Self-plagiarism – reuse of one’s own data or previously written work, or parts of it, in a subsequent publication, research paper or other output, without appropriate acknowledgement that the material had previously been published.

5.5 Exploitation – deliberate exploitation of or stealing ideas from others without acknowledgement; and/or collection of data through exploitation of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, or infringing on the privacy of participants, or employing data collection processes that may be harmful to participants or subjecting them to more risk than is necessary.

5.6 Improper Attribution of Authorship or Citation – listing individuals as authors without their permission; or attributing credit of authorship or co-authorship to an individual where there has been no significant contribution towards the work; denial or lack of appropriate acknowledgement to an individual who primarily produced the work; or unethical practices in citation, manuscript or grant proposal review.

5.7 Non-disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest – misrepresentation of interests, including failure to declare material interests or disclosure of any potential conflict of interest, either of the research or of a relationship to the sponsor of the research.

5.8 Ethics – failure to comply with requirements for the protection of human, animal subjects or artefacts, including the methods employed in the collection or use of data involving human participants, animals or artefacts before ethical approval is obtained from the respective ethics committee under the auspices of the [Committee on Research Practices](#)¹.

5.9 Collusion or Concealment – colluding in or facilitating research misconduct by others; and concealment or deliberate failure to report such actions by others.

A finding of research misconduct requires that:

- the action giving rise to the misconduct relates to research
- there is deliberate, significant, dangerous or negligent deviation from accepted research practices
- the allegation is proven on the balance of probabilities

Research misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results. Genuine mistakes in the preparation, presentation or interpretation of data should be distinguished from those actions with intention to deceive.

6. Principles for the Investigation of Research Misconduct

The University will:

6.1 investigate all allegations of research misconduct brought to its attention, including allegations made against a former employee, visiting researcher, affiliate researcher or student, if the allegation relates to research which was undertaken while working/studying at the University. The unavailability of an accused for any reason, will not prevent the initiation or continuation of the investigation proceeding.

6.2 ensure that bona fide complaints are dealt with in a fair and timely manner, and with care and sensitivity; carry out investigations expeditiously and thoroughly, in an impartial, independent and objective manner; and treat the investigation proceedings with confidentiality to the maximum extent possible.

¹ Prior to the commencement of a research project, ethical approval, where necessary, should be sought from the [Animal Ethics Committee](#), the [Human and Artefacts Research Ethics Committee](#) and/or the [Safety Panel](#) via [Tick@Lab](#), the University's online research compliance management system.

- 6.3 regard the accused as being honest until shown to be otherwise, and make every attempt to ensure that the investigation proceeds without harm or reprisal to the accused and the complainant.
- 6.4 inform the accused of the allegation(s) at the appropriate time and provide him/her with the necessary materials and the opportunity to fully respond to the allegation(s) and to the investigation reports.
- 6.5 afford anyone found guilty of research misconduct the right to an appeal.
- 6.6 take all reasonable steps to ensure that the position and reputation of the accused is preserved, if an allegation is found not proven.
- 6.7 take all reasonable steps to protect the position and reputation of the complainant, where a complaint which has been found not proven was made in good faith.
- 6.8 take appropriate action against staff members or students who make frivolous, mischievous or malicious accusations of research misconduct.
- 6.9 notify the external research sponsor, funding agency, publisher and/or related parties, as necessary and appropriate, where an allegation of research misconduct is found proven.
- 6.10 make known the outcome of any investigation as quickly as possible to all relevant parties.
- 6.11 keep records of investigation proceedings and all related documentation relating to allegations of research misconduct. Such records shall be kept by the Secretary for the [Committee on Academic Integrity](#).

7. Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct

Alleged violations of research misconduct will be investigated using the procedures laid out in '[Procedural Framework Governing Violations of Academic Integrity](#)' and the '[Procedures for Handling Alleged Non-compliance and Complaints](#)' respectively. Allegations of cheating or plagiarism by students as part of their program of study leading to an award of the University will be referred to and dealt with under the '[Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#)' (Section B).

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