# RESEARCH POLICY FOR UCT

- ## MISSION STATEMENT

The University of Cape Town Research Policy flows from UCT's Mission Statement. UCT believes that a prime function of the university is to create information for society for the eventual betterment of that society, through the promotion of

- o Research-based teaching and learning;
- o Critical inquiry in the form of the search for new knowledge and better understanding;
- o An active developmental role in our cultural, economic, political, scientific and social environment, through the dissemination of results of research in scholarly publications, workshops and other academic fora, as well as through the popular media;
- o Pursuit of the highest standards of academic excellence in research, bearing in mind the responsibility to minimise, if not avoid, negative social and environmental effects of that research

- ## SCOPE

UCT strives to maintain and strengthen research, whether its applicability is immediately obvious or not. Research at UCT includes basic, curiosity-driven and applied research, as well as policy development, artistic and creative production. It encompasses a broad spectrum of mind-stretching activity, all characterised by necessarily strenuous intellectual endeavour and the intention to influence the thinking of others through teaching, publication and dissemination of ideas, results or data. It should impact students as well as the leading thinkers in the field. This characterisation of research applies to basic research and to the application of ideas to societal problems and needs.

- ## PEER REVIEW AND TEACHING

The judgment of the impact of research on leading thinkers is also the assurance of its quality, and is the basis for review. It is for these reasons that the university demands that its academic staff engage in publicly accessible research. Critical investigation of the basic concepts of their subject matter, and work on finding new ways to use knowledge to assist in societal or economic development, ensures that teachers continuously re-evaluate what they teach and how they teach it. This reflective process feeds back directly into teaching at all levels. Thus, staff and student involvement in research activity is seen as an integral contribution to teaching.

- ## RESEARCH ETHICS

In keeping with the emphasis on excellent research, UCT affirms the requirement of prior research ethics approval for research proposals involving human participants or any research using animals. Two committees, the Senate Ethics in Research Committee and the Senate Animal Ethics Committee, make and implement policy regarding research ethics and related matters. Faculty-level Research Ethics Committees and Animal Care and Use Committees review research proposals to ensure compliance with the highest ethics standards. Other

research must also comply with ethics standards, especially those that govern particular disciplines.

- **ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY**

UCT strives to maintain and develop quality assurance mechanisms for research. These include both qualitative and quantitative measures of quality in basic and applied research, extension work, and artistic creation emanating from scholarly endeavour. External peer judgment of outputs is the most significant mechanism of assessing research quality and it is the responsibility of individual researchers to ensure that their work is subjected regularly to peer-review. This can take the form of ratings by external agencies, assessment through periodic review of research groups, publication in peer-reviewed journals, departmental accreditation through professional associations, external examination of research theses, and professional review of artistic creation, exhibitions and performances. The university aims continually to improve both external and internal mechanisms of quality assurance through its Quality Assurance and Planning Information Working Group.

- **IMPLEMENTATION**

Through the University Research Committee, UCT seeks to promote research activity in the following ways

- o To support an environment of critical enquiry and research-based education through provision of resources to increase both the quality and the quantity of research output at UCT
- o To provide financial, administrative and facilitative support for research development and marketing of the intellectual property of UCT's research community
- o To identify and assist promising young researchers at UCT, particularly those from formerly disadvantaged sectors of our population, to receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development
- o To develop the university's research infrastructure through replacement of ageing physical equipment, improvement of library holdings, provision of an efficient and supportive administration
- o To promote high quality research and a culture of peer-review, through regular publication of research output in the form of the Annual Research Report, and periodic review of all research units and groupings
- o To promote group interactions and cross-disciplinary research, particularly in areas where such work is not common
- o To identify and promote areas of existing strength, or areas that currently lack strategic strength
- o To facilitate mutually beneficial interaction with industry in order to promote UCT's involvement in social, economic, technological and cultural development
- o To review research administration policy on an ongoing basis to aim for an optimal match between external opportunities, researchers' needs and interests and the fundamental elements of UCT's Mission Statement

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