

Working Paper # 20

NUST Research Ethics and Plagiarism Policy

Sponsored by Research Dte

1. Introduction and Rationale

NUST faculty publishes on average 2000 research articles every year as stated from the source of Web of Science and Scopus. NUST and its faculty members take utmost care in the novelty of the publications and intellectual honesty in their research. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has published a policy in 2020 to manage and regulate plagiarism and ethical cases. NUST research ethics and plagiarism committee until now has dealt with greater than 10 cases of research ethics and plagiarism with full authority invested in the committee and with each case having its own complexity. No policy exist to deal with different ethical situation. Therefore, a policy is required which states clear guidelines necessary to manage ethical issues at NUST and helps student and faculty member have access to an office of Research Ethics and Committee. Under this policy, an academicians or student with a complaint can contact the Ethics Office based on the regulation in the policy paper and the ethics office will then have the necessary mandate to investigate the case and bring it forward to the Research ethics committee for a decision. This policy will also give the research ethics committee the mandate to be in-coordination with HEC and other regulatory offices for forwarding ethical cases of faculty members and students and also provide justice to research ethics and plagiarism cases.

2. Aim of the policy

The aim of the policy:

- (i). To specify the rules of research ethics and plagiarism at NUST
- (ii). To formulate a policy document on research ethics and plagiarism which compliments the HEC plagiarism policy
- (iii). To discourage plagiarism by punitive actions against research plagiarism and ethical issues.



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(iv). The policy deals with only research and not academic related plagiarism and ethical issues.

3. Working Papers to be Modified

- a. ACM approved Working Paper No. 38 “Establishment of ERC/IRB for NUST research” approved on 17 March 2021 in the 60th ACM (**Annex A**)
- b. ORIC Policy 2015: Research Ethics and Avoidance of Plagiarism (**Annex B**)

4. Definition of Research Ethics and Plagiarism

Important definitions of terms need to define before writing the rules.

The Frascati definition of research states that:

“Research and experimental development comprise of creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge - including the knowledge of humankind, culture and society - and to devise new applications of available knowledge” [1].

Whereas Ethics are a:

“Personal code of conduct based on respect for oneself, others and surroundings and is governed by the principles or assumptions underpinning the way individuals or organizations ought to conduct themselves” [2].

Research ethics involves the

“Application of fundamental ethical principles to research activities which include the design and implementation of research, respect towards society and others, the use of resources and research outputs, scientific misconduct, and the regulation of research” [3].

There are many ethical considerations when undertaking research. Key amongst them is the protection of: (i). Human participants, (ii). Welfare of animal subjects, (iii). Handling of personal data and (iv). Respect for intellectual property. Regarding research involving point (i-iii), their policies are covered by ACM approved Working Paper No. 38 “*Establishment of ERC/IRB for NUST research*” (**Annex A**) approved on 17 March 2021 in the 60th ACM.

The main crux of this policy deals with intellectual property rights, plagiarism and research ethics issues.

The intellectual property is the *“Output of intellectual endeavours in literary, artistic, dramatic, industrial, scientific and engineering fields, which is generally capable of being identified and protected. The protection of IP is provided through certain legal rights many of which are established under legislation, common law and international treaties”* [4].

For publications, plagiarism is a main factor of concern which is governed by the HEC plagiarism policy. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, To **“Plagiarise”** is defined as *“take and use another person's thoughts, writings, and inventions as one's own”* [5] and *“To copy another person's words or work and pretend that they are your own”* [6]. Examples of plagiarism [7] include:

- (i). Verbatim copying, near-verbatim copying, or purposely paraphrasing portions of another author's paper or unpublished report without citing the exact reference.
- (ii). Copying elements of another author's paper, such as equations or illustrations that are not common knowledge or copying or purposely paraphrasing sentences without citing the source.
- (iii). Verbatim copying portions of another author's paper or from reports by citing but not clearly differentiating what text has been and /or not citing the source correctly.
- (iv). The unacknowledged use of computer programs, mathematical / computer models / algorithms, computer software in all forms, macros, spreadsheets, web pages, databases, mathematical deviations and calculations, designs / models / displays of any sort, diagrams, graphs, tables, drawings, works of art of any sort, fine art pieces or artifacts, digital images, computer-aided design drawings, GIS files, photographs, maps, music / composition of any sort, posters, presentations and tracing."
- (v). Self-plagiarism, that is, the verbatim or near-verbatim re-use of significant portions of one's own copyrighted work without citing the original source.

The Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) follows the definition of **authorship** as laid down by International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [8] which states that:

The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

- (i). *Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND*
- (ii). *Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND*
- (iii). *Final approval of the version to be published; AND*

(iv). Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

5. Rules of the Policy

- a. The University is committed to promoting a safe environment free from abuse, harassment, bullying and physical violence for all individuals conducting or participating in research and innovation activities.
- b. Our Code of Practice clarifies the responsibilities of the University and its researchers towards those that participate in our research and innovation activities.
- c. The policy is applicable to all students, teachers, researchers and staff of NUST who are involved in research.
- d. Research Ethics and Plagiarism cases will be judged based upon the following documents as mandated by Higher Education Commission:
 - (i). *Little Book of Plagiarism by The Leeds Metropolitan University (Annex C)*
 - (ii). *HEC Plagiarism Policy 2020 (Annex D)*
- e. If a complaint is required to be brought forward, it should be communicated to the Research Directorate Office by the Faculty member, student and NUST School and Department. Any supporting evidence to the case should be forwarded.
- f. A Research Integrity Office webpage created on the Research Dte website has information on the contact details of Research Integrity Officer and the policy papers.
- g. Cases received from other institutions outside NUST or from HEC as well, would be directed to the Research Dte.
- h. NUST Research Ethics Committee is only university body to provide final judgement.
- i. The investigation will be carried out independently and without force or peer pressure.
- j. If a conflict of interest is seen from a member of the committee, that member should withdraw him or herself from the committee.
- k. NUST Research ethics and plagiarism cases will be brought in front of committee members mentioned in Section 6.
- l. The decision of research ethics committee will be communicated to all stakeholders.
- m. Research Ethics Complaint received from students to any school/directorate should be directed Research Dte

- n. Research Dte will process the case on minute sheet for necessary processing / disposal by Pro-Rector (RIC).
- o. Ethical approval of a project will be carried out by the institutional review board (IRB) and not by the Research Ethics Committee.
- p. To improve the quality of research, NUST has acquired access to the anti-plagiarism software "Turnitin". All NUST publications submitted for any conference/journal or published independently as thesis, research articles and assignments are to be evaluated for plagiarism using "Turnitin" Software.
- q. The Turnitin report is mandated for the processing of all publications related cases i.e. Article Processing Charges, Financial Awards etc. and for NUST Research Portal.
- r. NUST institutions at all levels (i.e. Principal / Commandant / Head of Department / Dean / Supervisor / Faculty Member) must ensure that publications or any written materials presented (i.e. reports, papers, thesis, assignment etc) by our Faculty/Students are free from the plagiarism.
- s. "Turnitin" accounts can only be operated by Faculty members. Access to Turnitin can be provided to Faculty members on intimation to Research Directorate
- t. A copy of verified originality report checked through "Turnitin" is to be attached with publications (both conference & journal) whenever these are sent to NUST.
- u. Also in case of publications directly submitted for conference/journal publication these reports be verified by school/college authorities through Turnitin.
- v. As per HEC Guidelines, an overall similarity of the content maximum of up to 19%, and single-source similarity must not exceed 5%.
- w. The research ethics committee will follow rules set down by International Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE).
- x. REC will ensure that during the investigation they will, under no circumstances, disclose any individual author's name, paper titles, referees, or any other personal or specific information concerning the plagiarism complaint under investigation.
- y. REC will provide every opportunity to all stakeholders under investigation to justify their point of view.



- z. Collaboration on research should be carried out on mutual consensus. Any ethical issues related to concept notes of project can also be referred to REC.

6. Composition of the Research Ethics Committee

- a. The committee is henceforth known as the “NUST Standing Committee on Plagiarism and Research Ethics”.
- b. The committee will deal with cases of publications related to research ethics and plagiarism, project collaboration issues & completion, PhD thesis issues, intellectual property rights, patents related problems, citation manipulation, data falsification/ fabrication etc.
- c. The composition of “NUST Standing Committee on Plagiarism and Research Ethics” is as follows:

a. Pro-Rector (RIC)	-	President
b. Director (HR)	-	Member
c. Director (Academics)	-	Member
d. Director (QA)	-	Member
e. Rep of HEC	-	Member
f. Principal / Dean of the Institution	-	Member
g. Director (ICON)	-	Member (Optional)
h. Subject Specialist	-	Member (Optional)
i. General Manager (IPLA)	-	Member (Optional)
j. Assistant Director HR Legal	-	Member (Optional)
k. Senior Student of the Faculty	-	Member (Optional)
l. Director (Research)	-	Secretary


- d. The above committee will deal with cases of **plagiarism and research publications ethics** at the University level in accordance with HEC Plagiarism Policy and University policies/code of conduct.
- e. In the absence of local rules/regulations for research ethics, guidelines from best national/international practices will be considered for resolving the issues and decision making.

7. References

- [1]. OECD (2015), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- [2-4]. <https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-ethics-and-integrity/understanding-ethics/>
- [5]. "Plagiarise"- The Concise Oxford Dictionary (6th Edition) – Published 1976
- [6]. "Plagiarise"- The Oxford advanced learners dictionary (6th Edition) - Published 2000
- [7]. HEC Plagiarism Policy 2020
- [8]. <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

8. Approval from ACM

The working paper was recommended by 10th UCRIP held on 17 Aug 2023, and duly approved by 66th ACM held on 01 Sept 2023.



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