POLICY ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

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Contents

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This policy is based on the vision of the University of South Africa (UNISA): *The African University shaping futures in the service of humanity.*

1.2   It is essential that research be conducted in accordance with the constitutional provisions, policies and legislative frameworks that guide research and innovation, ethical considerations espoused in the UNISA Ethical Policy Framework and the Code of Ethics and Conduct and the protection of human subjects.

1.3   This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant UNISA policies.

1.4   This policy shall regulate research and innovation at UNISA provided that if there is any conflict between this policy and any other policy dealing with research and innovation, the meaning contained in this policy will take preference, unless the context expressly indicates otherwise

2.   DEFINITIONS

In this document, the following terms are defined as follows, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Academic associate	is a person appointed in terms of the Delegation By Council of Decision Making Authority Policy, and shall include Professor Extraordinary, Honorary Professor and, Research Fellow, but excluding Post-Doctoral Fellow, or Emeritus Professor
Bureau	is a structure that functions on a membership model aimed at generating additional resources (third stream income) aimed at extending the research and community engagement capacity of UNISA;
Department	is an operational unit established by UNISA;
Developing researcher	refers to a researcher who is:

1. permanently employed by UNISA, and

2. registered for a master's degree;

Discipline	relates to a specific field of academic study and specialization;
Endowed research chair	means a professorship funded by endowment funds specifically set up for that purpose;
Endowed research chair incumbent	means the Professor appointed to the Endowed Research Chair;
Emerging researcher	is a researcher who is:

	1. permanently employed by Unisa, and
	2. registered for a doctoral degree; or has a doctoral degree that is less than five years old and has produced less than three accredited research outputs in the last five years, and
	3. not a proven and NRF-rated researcher;
Innovation	means the creation and successful implementation of new ideas and inventions through the generation of tangible outcomes that benefits society;
NRF-rated researcher	is a researcher who has been awarded a rating by the National Research Foundation;
Paradigm	refers to the national and international framework within which research takes place in a given discipline or fields and which determines the possible methodologies, assumptions and hypotheses in that discipline or field or across disciplines or fields;
Peer review	Means a system that is designed to ensure that only high quality and reliable information is published in scholarly books and scientific journals. It is the evaluation of creative work or performance by specialists in the same subject field in order to ensure the quality of the work or performance in that field. A double-blind peer review process is preferable.
Proven researcher	refers to a researcher who is:
	1. permanently employed by Unisa, and
	2. in possession of a doctoral degree and has produced at least three accredited research outputs (of which at least two publications are in accredited journals) during the foregoing five years; or has been awarded a rating by the NRF and is still producing accredited research outputs;
Research	means a systematic investigation aimed at the development of, or contribution to, knowledge through acceptable means of scientific dissemination.
Research associates	collectively refer to academic associates, visiting researchers and postdoctoral fellows and are not employees of Unisa;
Research entity	refers to one of the following recognized entities:

- College of Graduate Studies
- College of Accounting Sciences

- College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
- College of Economic and Management Sciences
- College of Education
- College of Human Sciences
- College of Law
- College of Science, Engineering and Technology
- Professional Research Group (PRG), comprising professional employees
- Graduate School for Business Leadership
- Any other entity recognized by Senate as a research entity;

Research institute	is an academic unit for the purpose of facilitating collaborative multi-, inter- and/or trans-disciplinary research and to provide research-based knowledge;
Research output	An output recognised in the Research Output Policy, 2015 (Government Gazette 38552 of 11 March 2015) and the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions, 2017 (Government Gazette 40819 of 28 April 2017). The output may be one of the following:

1. **Journals**

   Journals refer to peer-reviewed periodical publications devoted to the dissemination of original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study. These include original articles, research letters, research papers and review articles. Journals must have a peer review policy.

2. **Books**

   Books refer to peer-reviewed, non-periodical scholarly or research publications disseminating original research and developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study. Scholarly books are characterised as follows:

   2.1 An extensive and in-depth scholarly treatment of a topic by one or more scholars, largely comprising significant and original (own) research, embedded in relevant literature.

   2.2 An extensive and in-depth scholarly exposition by one or more scholars of the available literature on a topic, from a position of demonstrable authority, which makes a significant conceptual or empirical synthesis that advances scholarship.

   2.3 A collected work, assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a field or group of related fields, which, as a planned group of individually peer-reviewed

chapters by appropriately qualified authors, generates a new conceptual synthesis that advances scholarship.

2.4 A collective work, assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a number of related fields, in which the individual authors have noted and reviewed one another's chapters and adapted their contributions to generate a new conceptual synthesis that significantly advances scholarship.

3. **Proceedings**

Proceedings refer to a published record of a conference, congress, symposium or other meeting where the purpose was to discuss and disseminate original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study. Published conference proceedings must meet the following criteria:

3.1 The purpose of the proceedings must be to disseminate original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study.

3.2 Complete articles (not abstracts) accepted for publication in the proceedings must be peer reviewed prior to publication, for which evidence must be given.

3.3 The proceedings must have an International Standard Book or Serial Number (ISBN or ISSN).

3.4 Proceedings published online must have an e-ISBN or e-ISSN.

3.5 The target audience of the proceedings must be specialists in the relevant field.

3.6 More than 60% of contributions published in the conference proceedings being submitted for a subsidy claim must emanate from multiple institutions.

3.7 The conference must have an editorial board and/or organising committee, with a significant majority of members beyond a single institution, which is reflective of expertise in the relevant subject area.

4.   Completed research master's or doctoral degrees.

5.   Other peer-reviewed publications recognised by Senate on recommendations by colleges.

6.   Creative Outputs

    6.1   Fine Arts and Visual Arts
    6.2   Music
    6.3   Theatre
    6.4   Performance and Dance
    6.5   Design
    6.6   Film and Television
    6.7   Literary Arts
    6.8   Innovations:
          6.8.1 Patents
          6.8.2 Plant breeders' rights (PBR)

Research output units	refer to the number of units allocated by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to a research output for the purposes for calculating subsidy based on the Research Output Policy, 2015 (Government Gazette 38552 of 11 March 2015) and the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions, 2017 (Government Gazette 40819 of 28 April 2017);
Researcher	refers to all permanently appointed Unisa employees and current academic associates and collectively to developing researchers, emerging researchers and proven researchers;
School	refers to an entity named as such or a cluster of related departments established by UNISA;
Student	means any person officially registered for a Unisa qualification, short learning programme or postdoctoral fellow;
Theory	refers to a basic explanatory model(s) in a given subject as determined by the dominant paradigm;
Works	are outputs as defined in this policy that are protected by copyright law;

3.   ABBREVIATIONS

CoD	means the Chairperson of a Department
CRIC	means the College Research and Innovation Committee
DHET	means the Department of Higher Education and Training;

ECC	means the Executive Committee of College, including delegated College committees;
ERC	means the Ethics Review Committee;
GAAP	means Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
HoI	means the Head of an Institute;
HRD	means the Human Resources Department;
IFRS	means the International Financial Reporting Standard;
IPCC	means the Intellectual Property and Commercialisation Committee;
NHREC	means the National Health Research Ethics Council;
NRF	means the National Research Foundation;
PRG/C	means the Professional Research Group / Committee;
RPSIC	means Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation;
Senex	means the Executive Committee of Senate;
SPC	means the Senate Publication Committee;
SRIPCC	means the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee;
URERC	means the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee.

4. AIM

The policy aims to advance the mission of the University, the relevant part of which states:

The University of South Africa is a comprehensive, open and distance e-learning (ODeL) higher education institution, which, in response to the diverse needs of society,

4.1 undertakes research and knowledge production development guided by integrity, quality and rigour

4.2 cultivates and promotes an institutional ethos, intellectual culture and educational experience conducive to critical discourse, intellectual curiosity, tolerance and a diversity of views.

5.   PURPOSE OF POLICY

The primary purpose of the Research and Innovation Policy is to encourage quality and innovative research by providing an enabling environment in which researchers, research associates and students can flourish and gain in stature both nationally and internationally.

6.   SCOPE

The policy is based on the principle of academic freedom as guaranteed in section 16(1)(d) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996. Academic freedom encourages the free exchange of ideas that is a necessary prerequisite for academic excellence. This freedom is implied in all stages and aspects of research, such as theories, paradigms, publications and associations.

All researchers and research associates form part of both a national and international community of researchers and, as such, adhere to certain standards of relevance and responsibility. Research is therefore carried out in accordance with relevant professional codes and internationally accepted ethical guidelines.

7.   PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

Research and innovation at UNISA is based on the following principles:

7.1   Research is, at the most basic level, a human activity. This implies that research is never value-neutral or mechanistic. Researchers have preconceptions determined by social, political, cultural and gender influences. These preconceptions influence both their theories and findings.

7.2   Research is a communal activity. Researchers work as part of a national and international community of scholars. This community influences the paradigms within which research is undertaken in and across disciplines and/or subjects.

7.3   Research may be interdisciplinary, discipline-, field- and subject-specific.

7.4   Research is theory-dependent. It is informed by the dominant theories in certain fields and theories, in turn, are influenced by the paradigms referred to above.

7.5   Research is intended to better our understanding of how the world functions as well as to meet its needs.

7.6   Research involves creative, innovative, systematic and original work.

7.7   Research includes basic, applied, strategic and reflexive scholarly activities.

7.8   Appropriate credits should be given where data and/or information obtained from other sources, studies or publications is/are included. Researchers, research associates and students must

refrain from engaging in plagiarism, piracy or falsification of research results. Committing any of these actions is regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

7.9 Research conducted by UNISA researchers, research associates and students must comply with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

7.10 Research involving UNISA employees, students and/or data must comply with the UNISA policy for conducting research involving UNISA employees, students or data.

8.   OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AT UNISA

The objectives of research and innovation at UNISA are listed below. The various policy documents dealing with research and innovation aim to implement these objectives:

8.1 To design a broad UNISA research and innovation agenda and policies with strategic focus areas that align with national priorities, yet are globally significant, based on the UNISA Strategy 2016 – 2030 and the priorities set out in the National Plan for Higher Education and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training.

8.2 To encourage and support researchers, research associates and students in all fields and disciplines.

8.3 To enhance the University's standing as a research and innovation institution of international repute.

8.4 To specifically develop, support and encourage developing and emerging researchers to become proven researchers and, eventually, to obtain NRF rating.

8.5 To support and encourage proven researchers to obtain, maintain and improve their NRF rating.

8.6 To facilitate the dissemination of research findings through publication in accredited journals, books and book chapters for the subject specialist and peer-reviewed conference proceedings.

8.7 To inform and enhance teaching and learning, postgraduate studies and professional practice.

8.8 To become a leading ODeL research institution.

8.9 To encourage the use of research findings and activities to enhance teaching and learning and community engagement activities at the University.

9.   SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AT UNISA

To achieve the objectives set out above, the University provides the following support for researchers:

9.1 UNISA supports all research entities to make it possible for researchers to achieve the benchmarks set out in paragraph 10 of this policy.

9.2 UNISA provides the infrastructure required for research and innovation. This includes office space, library facilities, laboratories, ICT and services, support for the editing and publishing of scholarly journals and scholarly books and various other administrative and support services.

9.3 UNISA funds various research and innovation activities through its SRIPCC. In allocating such funds, the SRIPCC is guided by this policy and the Policy on Grants from the Research Funds.

9.4 UNISA grants research and development leave to permanent employees in accordance with the Policy on Research Development Leave specifically to encourage research and the completion of research master's and doctoral qualifications.

9.5 UNISA appoints dedicated research professors and academic associates (excluding emeritus professors) to enhance the University's research profile, by increasing the number of accredited research outputs and improving postgraduate education.

9.6 UNISA rewards meritorious research in several ways as contained in the Policy on Grants from Research Funds.

9.7 Ad hominem promotions to senior academic positions depend, *inter alia,* on a good research track record.

9.8 UNISA supports researchers from the designated groups as a special category in accordance with employment equity and gender mainstreaming policies.

9.9 UNISA supports developing, emerging and proven researchers as set out in this and other policies on research and innovation.

9.10 Through the College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate and Research Offices in other colleges, UNISA provides dedicated support for postgraduate students.

10. MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

10.1 The management of research and innovation at UNISA is undertaken within the framework provided by the *Good Practice Guide for Quality Management of Research* issued by the Higher Education Quality Committee, July 2005.

10.2 The overall responsibility for quality management of research, and the research and innovation policy at UNISA rests with Senate and is subject to approval by Council. Council may approve the appointment of persons and/or committees for such objects and purposes and with such powers and duties as it may decide, and shall determine the terms of reference of such, as follows:

    10.2.1 SRIPCC

    a) The provision for the academic merits of research and innovation activities at the University.

    10.2.2 The Vice Principal: Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation

a)   The provision of strategic leadership in research and innovation.

10.2.3   The Executive Director: Research, Innovation and Commercialization

a)   The development of an institutional research and innovation functional plan. The Executive Director liaises with the key internal and external stakeholders such as the DHET and the NRF at the level of policy, strategy and vision.

b)   The provision of adequate resources provided for research and innovation facilitation in the institution.

10.2.4   Research entities

a)   The management of research and innovation, for example compiling research and innovation plans and the implementation thereof.

b)   The conducting of research audits at regular and strategic intervals.

10.3   The operational management of research and innovation is managed by the research entities.

    10.3.1   All research entities must present annual research and innovation plans at the first meeting of the SRIPCC.

    10.3.2   The performance of each research entity is measured against the goals and targets in the approved plans on a quarterly basis.

    10.3.3   An annual performance report is presented to the SRIPCC at the first meeting of the committee annually.

10.4   The University will provide adequate resources for research and innovation.

10.5   Research entities will enable the development of developing and emerging researchers to do research and to provide them with adequate time and facilities for this purpose.

10.6   Proven researchers as part of their academic duty are expected to assist less experienced colleagues in developing research skills, particularly those skills relating to research planning, research design and publication.

10.7   Researchers who require such assistance are encouraged to approach the chairperson of the department, the director of the school, the executive dean of the college or the Executive Director: Research, Innovation and Commercialisation.

10.8   Basic research competence is demonstrated by obtaining a doctoral degree. This degree should be regarded as the minimum qualification and the first priority for all researchers.

11. MEASUREMENT AND BENCHMARKING

To achieve the objectives set out above, research outputs need to be evaluated, measured and benchmarked. The following principles apply when research is evaluated and benchmarked:

11.1 As a general rule, assessment of research is based on the Research Output Policy 2015 (Government Gazette 38552 of 11 March 2015) and the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions, 2017 (Government Gazette 40819 of 28 April 2017).

11.2 Peer review is the only realistic, objective criterion that can be used to evaluate research excellence.

11.3 Every researcher and research associate is expected to generate at least the following number of accredited research output units:

Level	5 year period	3 year period	1 year period
Endowed Research chair (P5)	20	12	4
Research professor (P5)	-	9	3
Professor in research institute (P5)	15	9	3
Professor (P5) in college	7	5	1.5
Associate Professor (P6) in institute			
Associate Professor (P6) in college or bureau	6	4	1.2
Senior lecturer (P7) in institute			
Senior Lecturer with doctoral degree (P7) in college	5	3	1
Senior researcher (P7) in institute or bureau			
Senior lecturer without doctoral degree (P7) in college	Register and complete formal post graduate qualification		
Lecturer with doctoral degree (P8) in college	2	1	0.5
Researcher (P8) in institute or bureau			
Lecturer without doctoral degree (P8) in college	Register and complete formal post graduate qualification		
Junior lecturer without doctoral degree (P9) in college	Register and complete formal postgraduate qualification		
Junior researcher (P9) in institute	1	0.5	0.25

ACADEMIC ASSOCIATES Professor Extraordinarius Research fellow	5	2	1

Level	Research output units per year
Visiting research fellow	1
Visiting research professor	1

Postdoctoral fellows are expected to submit a minimum of two research outputs (accredited journal papers) per annum. These may be co-authored.

11.4 Low-quality journals – UNISA discourages all researchers from publishing in journals without any evidence of a rigorous peer-review process Research Output Policy 2015 (Government Gazette 38552 of 11 March 2015) and the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions, 2017 (Government Gazette 40819 of 28 April 2017). Publishing in such journals, even if DHET accredited, may not be recognised by UNISA. Evidence of the peer-review process as well as evidence of peer review for the specific article may be requested from the author.

11.5 The DHET currently awards one research output unit for a full research paper published in an accredited journal. The research output unit is then shared equally among the number of authors, irrespective of the percentage of work contributed by each author. DHET-approved creative research outputs submissions can be awarded a maximum of 2 units. Patents are awarded 2 units.

11.6 The DHET currently recognizes completed research master's and doctoral degrees as research outputs (one research output unit for a research master's degree and three output units for a doctoral degree). For the purposes of the integrated performance management system (IPMS):

a) An employee who acts as a supervisor will be credited with 0.5 research output units for each UNISA research master's student after completion and 1.0 research output unit for each UNISA doctoral student after completion. The research output unit is then shared equally among the number of supervisors for a particular student.

b) An employee who is also a postgraduate student will be credited with 0.5 and 1.0 research output units for the completion of a research master's or doctoral degree respectively, irrespective of the institution where it is completed.

	Employees who act as supervisors	Employees who are also postgraduate students
Completed research master's degree	0.5	0.5
Completed doctoral degree	1.0	1.0

12. AVAILABILITY AND REVISION OF POLICY

12.1 To ensure the transparency of research management at UNISA, copies of this general Research and Innovation policy, and of all the more specific policies and procedures to which it refers, are made available online on the UNISA intranet.

12.2 This policy document, and all the more specific policy documents to which it refers, are revised regularly (at least once in three years) to ensure that research and innovation at UNISA continues to be managed in the University's long-term interest. Proposed amendments to the policy must comply with the UNISA Policy on Policy/Rules Formulation.

12.3 As with any other policy, the success of this policy depends upon the way in which the various research entities concerned implement its directives.

13. IMPLEMENTATION AT COLLEGE, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENTAL AND DIRECTORATE LEVEL

13.1 Research and innovation, like teaching and learning, is managed mainly at departmental level. Chairpersons of departments/heads of institutes/directors are responsible for managing research and innovation and are accountable for the time and other resources spent in their respective units.

13.2 Each research entity manages research and innovation according to its research and innovation plan that is approved by SRIPCC. This plan indicates the overall objectives of the department's/institute's research and explains how the projects researchers, research associates and students relate to these objectives.

13.3 All research entities are accountable to SRIPCC for the resources they utilize for research and innovation purposes.

13.4 Research conducted by master's and doctoral students forms an important component of UNISA's research effort. Departments are encouraged to recruit master's and doctoral candidates who will contribute to the entity's research and innovation plan and help meet the University's research objectives.

13.5 Employees and students who are completing/have completed a master's or doctoral qualification are encouraged to submit articles for publication based on their research.

14.   IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Council may by notice, after consulting all stakeholders, make regulations, rules or Standard Operating Procedures regarding any matter that may be necessary or expedient to prescribe in order to achieve the objects of this Policy.

This policy becomes effective from the date on which Council approves it.

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