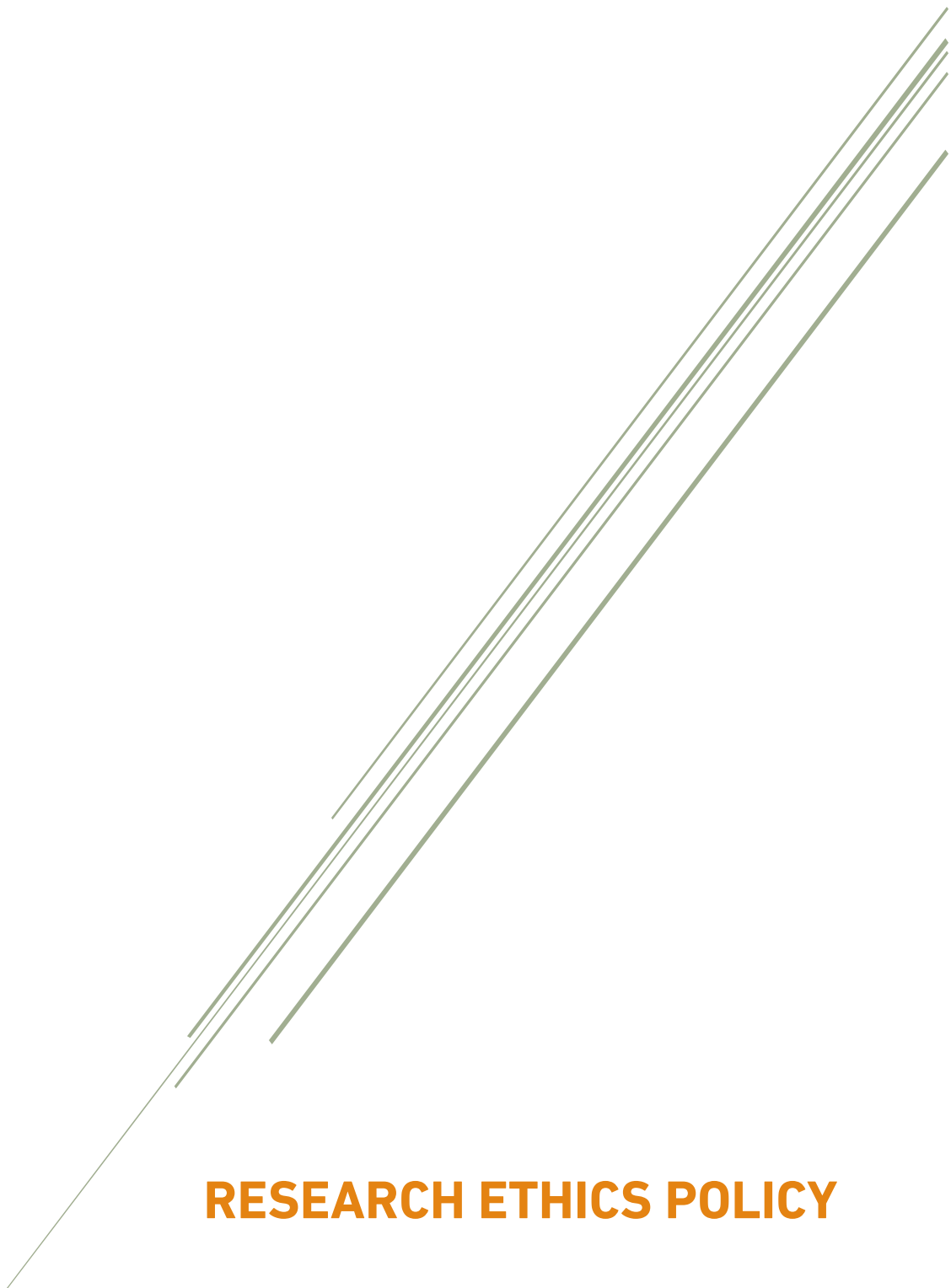




RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

POLICY DETAILS			
Policy Title	Research Ethics Policy		
Policy Number	RP-26-04		
Policy Area (Choose one)	☐ Governance	☐ Academic	☐ Administrative
	☒ Research	☐ Student Affairs	
Policy Owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research, and Innovation		
Policy Status	☒ New Policy	☐ Major Amendment	☐ Minor Amendment
Approval Authority	University Council		
Approval Status	☒ Approved	☐ Under Review	
Approval Date	10 May 2026		
Lead Contact	Dean of Scientific Research and Consultation		
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VERSION CONTROL

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Feedback and Amendments

Version No.	Date	Summary of Revisions or Feedback
v0.1	01-04-2024	Initial draft Benchmarking and collection of existing practices across branches
v0.2	01-10-2025	Draft circulated to relevant stakeholders for feedback.
v0.3	23-02-2026	PMS compliance review conducted
v0.4	30-3-2026	Reviewed by the Academic Council and the identified issues were addressed.

Plagiarism Verification

Version No.	Date	% of Similarity	Remarks
V0.4	30-3-2026	10%	Similarity is attributed to standard policy terminology, references, and institutional names.

Proofreading

Version No.	Date	Proofread By:	Remarks
v0.4	29-03- 2026	Dr Sergio Saleem	Recommended enhancements to improve clarity, wording, and eliminate repetition.

SIGNATURE AND STAMP



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RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes the ethical principles and standards governing all research activities conducted under the name, affiliation, funding, or supervision of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS). It exists to:

- Provide a respectful and safe research environment that upholds the dignity, rights, and welfare of all research participants.
- Establish clear ethical obligations that comply with national regulatory requirements and internationally recognised ethical best practices.
- Enhance the university's academic and research reputation at the national and international levels.
- Promote ethical awareness and build capacity among researchers, students, and staff in responsible research conduct.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all University affiliates who conduct research as part of their employment, educational programmes, or institutional associations with UTAS, including academic staff, researchers, students, visiting researchers, and any person conducting research under the University's name or with its resources.

It covers all forms of scholarly and research output, including funded and unfunded publications, theses, reports, patents, software, artistic works, consultancy projects, and other academic outputs, whether conducted on or off campus. It also extends to off-campus collaborative research involving University personnel.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, responsibility, and ethical conduct in all research activities conducted under its name. This policy ensures the protection of the dignity, rights, and welfare of research participants while promoting transparency, accountability, and compliance with national regulations and internationally recognised ethical standards.

All research involving human participants, personal data, animals, biological materials, or any form of potential risk must obtain prior ethical approval from the appropriate authorised body before the commencement of data collection or fieldwork.

Researchers should ensure informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, risk assessment, and compliance with national legislation, University bylaws, and related institutional policies.

Failure to comply with this policy — including conducting research without ethical approval, breaching confidentiality, falsifying data, or engaging in research misconduct — shall result in institutional action in accordance with the University's regulations and disciplinary procedures.

Through this policy, the University establishes governance for ethical review, monitoring, and accountability. It ensures that research is conducted in a manner that protects participants and upholds academic integrity. The University affirms its strategic commitment to responsible research and societal trust.

4. AUDIENCE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DELEGATION

ROLES	RESPONSIBILITIES
Deputy Vice Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research and Innovation	Provides overall oversight of the implementation of the Research Ethics Policy and ensures alignment of the policy with national regulations and international standards.
Dean of Scientific Research and Consultation	Monitors the implementation of the policy at the university level and supports ethical review processes.
Head of Scientific Research Section	Accountable for ensuring compliance with this policy within the scientific research departments across the branches. Ensures that all University affiliates under their authority are aware of and adhere to the requirements of this policy. Escalates known or suspected breaches to the Dean of Scientific Research and Consultation.
Head of Consultation Section	Accountable for ensuring that research outputs arising from consultancy activities comply with the ethical standards of this policy.
Assistant Vice Chancellor at the Branch/ Dean of the College of Education	Oversee the implementation of the policy at the branch level and ensure compliance with institutional procedures.
Deputy AVC for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research and Innovation (Branch)/ Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research (College)	Supports the implementation of this policy at branch level and is accountable for monitoring compliance with ethical standards within the branch.

Head of Research and Consultation Department.	Conducts the initial ethical review of research proposals within the branch, monitors researchers' compliance with ethical standards, and refers complex cases to the Deputy of Assistant Vice Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research and Innovation or Dean of Scientific Research and Consultation when necessary.
All University Affiliates	Comply with the provisions of this policy and implement its requirements in all relevant research activities.

5. POLICY

This section constructs the key principles and requirements that govern the research ethical performance in the University. The procedures supporting this policy shall be read in conjunction with this policy.

General principles

The University requires that all research conducted under its affiliation be guided by the following ethical principles. These principles apply to all University affiliates within the scope of this policy:

- **Integrity and Transparency:** All aspects of research — including design, conduct, reporting, and publication — shall be conducted honestly and openly.
- **Personal Responsibility:** Each researcher bears full accountability for the ethical conduct of their research.
- **Respect and Collaboration:** The rights, dignity, and wellbeing of research participants and colleagues shall be always respected.
- **Compliance and Legitimacy:** All research shall adhere to applicable national and international laws, regulations, and institutional policies.
- **Fairness and Impartiality:** Researchers shall ensure non-discrimination in the treatment of participants, colleagues, and research outputs.

- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** The personal data and privacy of research participants shall be protected at all stages of the research process.
- **Research Freedom:** The University supports researchers' right to select their research topics, methodologies, and publication venues within the bounds of this policy and applicable regulations.
- **Competence:** Researchers shall possess and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct their research to the required standard.

University Obligations

The University affirms the following institutional obligations in support of ethical research:

- The University shall ensure that all research personnel are informed of and comply with applicable research ethics laws, regulations, and standards.
- The University shall maintain the highest standards of ethics, honesty, and professional integrity in research, and shall respond appropriately to any identified violations.
- The University should provide an environment that enables ethical research conduct and protects the safety and wellbeing of all research participants and personnel.
- The University shall support the development of researchers' ethical awareness and competence through appropriate training and capacity-building.
- The University shall ensure fair and non-discriminatory treatment of all researchers, regardless of gender, origin, race, religion, or any other characteristic unrelated to research ability.

Obligations of University Affiliates

All University affiliates conducting research under the University's affiliation are required to uphold the ethical principles of this policy. Specifically, they shall:

- Obtain ethical approval before commencing any research involving human participants, personal data, animals, biological materials, or identified risk, and ensure continued compliance with all ethical conditions throughout the research.
- Obtain informed consent from all research participants, provide them with clear and accurate information about the research, protect them from harm, and respect their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.
- Comply with applicable data protection laws, handle all personal data in a fair, transparent, and secure manner, and retain data in accordance with the university's data management requirements.
- Uphold academic integrity in all aspects of research — including methodology, data collection, analysis, and reporting — and disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Comply with all signed agreements and funding obligations and use research resources responsibly and only for approved research purposes.
- Report any known or suspected research misconduct or ethical breach to the Head of research and consultation department at the branch.
- Where a research assistant is involved, the Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that the research assistant is fully informed of and comply with all ethical principles and obligations under this policy.

Obligations of Research Supervisors

Research supervision is a position of institutional trust. Supervisors bear responsibility not only for the academic quality of the research they oversee, but also for the ethical environment in which it is conducted. Supervisors shall:

- possess academic and scientific expertise consistent with the field and specialisation of the research project they supervise.
- treat researchers with respect, preserve their autonomy in selecting research methods and approaches, and refrain from directing them toward topics that do not reflect their interests or from using their position for personal purposes.
- provide consistent guidance and support to enable researchers to complete their work to the required standard and within agreed timelines.
- uphold intellectual property rights and copyright when publishing research derived from students' theses or dissertations.
- respect the confidentiality of research information and the personal information of students and shall not use it without their consent.

Rights of Research Participants

The University affirms that all research participants hold the following rights, which shall be upheld by all University affiliates conducting research involving human subjects:

- The right to receive clear, accurate, and complete information about the research prior to consenting to participate.
- The right to withdraw from research at any time without being required to provide reasons, and to have their data deleted upon withdrawal.

- The right to ask questions and receive timely and clear responses from researchers before and during data collection.
- The right to receive the results of the research after data collection, where appropriate.
- The right to request a copy of the ethical approval to conduct the research, or other relevant official approvals.
- The right to participate free from any pressure or coercion. Participation in all research studies is entirely voluntary.

Research Involving Living Organisms and Biodiversity

The University requires that all research involving animals, plants, or other living organisms be conducted in accordance with the highest ethical standards and applicable national and international regulations. The following principles are binding on all University affiliates:

- The use of animals in research is subject to prior ethical approval. Alternatives to animal experimentation shall be considered and prioritised wherever possible. Where no alternative is available, the number of animals used shall be minimised and all measures taken to reduce pain, suffering, and distress to the lowest possible level.
- Animals used in research should be treated with respect and provided with care appropriate to their species and biological needs. Animals showing signs of unexpected pain or distress shall receive immediate relief. The use of anaesthesia or euthanasia, where required, should be conducted appropriately and humanely.

- The use of endangered or vulnerable species is subject to strict scientific justification and prior approval from the competent authority. Researchers shall ensure that their use of living organisms does not jeopardise biodiversity or disrupt ecological balance.
- Research involving plants — particularly endangered species — or research that may affect the tissue structure or biological integrity of plants requires prior scientific and ethical assessment and all required official approvals.
- All staff working with live animals should hold sufficient expertise in the biology and welfare requirements of the relevant species. Transparency in the sharing of data and materials from animal research is required to avoid unnecessary repetition of experiments.

Data Management and Protection

The responsible management and protection of research data is a core ethical obligation. The University requires that all research data be collected, stored, and used in compliance with the following principles:

- Informed consent must be obtained from participants prior to the collection of their data. Participants shall be clearly informed of the purpose, use, storage, and retention period of their data.
- All research data shall be handled, stored, and protected in compliance with applicable national data protection laws and regulations. Personal data shall not be retained beyond the period justified by research and shall not be shared or used for purposes outside the scope of the granted ethical approval.
- Research involving sensitive data shall comply with applicable national legislation, ethical standards, and institutional approval requirements.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

- The University recognises the increasing use of artificial intelligence tools in research and affirms that their use shall be consistent with the principles of academic integrity policy, transparency, and researcher accountability.
- University Affiliates remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and ethical conduct of all research outputs produced under the University's name or affiliation, regardless of the use of artificial intelligence tools.
- The use of artificial intelligence tools in research shall comply with applicable national legislation, recognised ethical standards, and relevant University policies governing research integrity.
- Detailed requirements governing the responsible use of artificial intelligence tools in research may be provided in separate University procedures or guidelines.

Conflict of Interest

The integrity of research depends on the objectivity of those who conduct it. The University requires that all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest be identified and managed transparently. Specifically:

- A conflict of interest arises when a researcher's financial, personal, or professional relationships may lead to bias in judgement and affect the quality or objectivity of research.

- University affiliates shall fully disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest — including financial interests, personal relationships, or other affiliations — when submitting an ethics approval request and at any subsequent point at which a conflict arises.
- University affiliates shall avoid actions that may harm the University's reputation, particularly when dealing with commercially sensitive, politically sensitive, or legally complex research topics.
- The University shall ensure that all staff responsible for research ethics review are trained to identify and manage potential conflicts of interest appropriately and impartially.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval is a mandatory requirement and a non-negotiable precondition for the commencement of any research that involves human participants, personal data, animals, biological materials, or an identified element of risk. The following principles apply:

- No data collection, fieldwork, or experimental activity may commence until written ethical approval has been granted by the designated research personnel.
- Ethical approval is research-specific and non-transferable. Any material change to the scope, methodology, or participant population of an approved study requires a formal amendment to the ethical approval before the change is implemented.

- Research that falls outside the scope of formal ethical approval requirements nonetheless remains subject to the general ethical principles of this policy.
- The University is committed to ensuring that the ethical review process is conducted impartially, transparently, and within a reasonable timeframe, and that all researchers are supported in meeting their ethical approval obligations.
- The University shall ensure that a formal mechanism exists for researchers to appeal ethical review decisions.

Research Misconduct

Research misconduct undermines the integrity of knowledge and harms the University's academic standing. The University takes a zero-tolerance approach to research misconduct in any form. Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Fabricating false data, results, or findings.
- Falsifying or altering data, documents, or information to make results conform to expectations or hypotheses.
- Plagiarising ideas, text, data, or other work from others without proper attribution.
- Failing to acknowledge the contributions of individuals or colleagues who participated in the research.
- Misusing data, disclosing participant identities without consent, or violating confidentiality obligations.
- Publishing the same research results in multiple forums or journals without disclosing prior publication.

- Abusing academic or administrative influence to pressure others or influence research outcomes.
- Failing to disclose conflicts of interest that affect the research.
- Misusing research funds or using them for purposes inconsistent with the stated research objectives.
- Sabotaging the materials, equipment, or research outputs of other researchers.

All University affiliates are required to report known or suspected research misconduct. Confirmed misconduct shall be investigated and sanctioned in accordance with the University's Academic Integrity Policy and applicable employment and student regulations.

5.1 Definitions

5.1.1 Research: A systematic investigation designed to generate or validate knowledge using recognised scholarly methods.

5.1.2 Researcher: Any individual engaged in research, including faculty members, students, or collaborators, whether internal to the University or contracted by it.

5.1.3 University Affiliate: Any individual conducting research under the name, affiliation, supervision, funding, or resources of the University. This includes academic staff, researchers, students, visiting scholars, adjunct or honorary staff, external collaborators, consultants, and any other person authorised to conduct research under the University's affiliation.

- 5.1.4** Research Ethics: A set of principles and standards that guide ethical conduct in research, including integrity, transparency, respect for participants, and responsibility towards society.
- 5.1.5** Research Participant: Individuals who agree to take part in research studies — through questionnaires, surveys, or experiments — after receiving sufficient information and providing written consent.
- 5.1.6** Informed Consent: The voluntary agreement of participants to take part in a study after receiving adequate information and having a full understanding of the potential risks and benefits.
- 5.1.7** Designated Research Personnel: The individual or individuals who are appointed by the University with the authority to conduct ethical review of research proposals, grant ethical approval, and monitor compliance with ethical standards across the University and its branches.
- 5.1.8** Ethical Review: An evaluation process conducted by the designated research personnel to ensure that studies are carried out in accordance with ethical standards.
- 5.1.9** Ethical Approval: The formal approval obtained from the designated research personnel prior to the commencement of any research or study to ensure compliance with ethical standards.
- 5.1.10** Data Protection: The set of principles and practices that ensure the confidentiality and security of data collected and used in research.
- 5.1.11** Personal Data: Any information that can be used to identify a specific individual, including name, identification number, or other data that may lead to re-identification.
- 5.1.12** Conflict of Interest: Any situation in which personal or financial interests may influence a researcher's objectivity or decision-making.

5.1.13 Academic Integrity: Adherence to ethical standards in research and teaching, including proper acknowledgement of others' contributions and the avoidance of cheating and plagiarism.

5.1.14 Research Misconduct: Any act that violates the standards of research integrity and ethics, including fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and infringement of the rights of others.

5.1.15 Supervisor: A faculty member or researcher responsible for guiding and mentoring researchers.

5.1.16 Animal Welfare: The physical and psychological wellbeing of animals used in research, assessed by reference to their ability to exhibit natural behaviours and adapt to their environment.

5.1.17 Artificial Intelligence Tools: Technology-based systems used to support research activities, including generating text, analysing data, responding to inquiries, and assisting with synthesis or proofreading.

5.2 Other Pertinent Elements

This policy shall be read in conjunction with the following University regulations and related policies. In the event of conflict, the UTAS Bylaws and applicable national regulations shall prevail:

- UTAS Bylaws.
- Academic Regulations of the University.
- UTAS Strategic Plan 2026–2030.
- Academic Integrity Policy.
- Intellectual Property Policy.
- Scientific Publishing Policy.

6. REFERENCES

SN	Institution Name	Referenced Points
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14	University of Sheffield	University of Sheffield. (2024). Ethics policy governing research involving human participants, personal data, and human tissue: General principles and statements (Version 8.1). https://students.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity/research-ethics
15	University of Wolverhampton	University of Wolverhampton. (2024). University ethics policy. https://www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies