DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY	
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Durban University of Technology (DUT) to independently evaluate, approve and monitor research that involves humans, animals and the environment within a framework of generally accepted research ethics guidelines.

2. DEFINITIONS

2. 1 **Animals** mean non-human vertebrates that are capable of being aware of sensations and emotions, of feeling pain and suffering, and of experiencing a state of well being; they are aware of their surroundings and of what happens to them.

2. 2 **Environment** means the combination of external physical conditions that affect and influence the growth, development and survival of organisms.

2. 3 **Faculty Research Committee (FRC)** means the Faculty-based subcommittee of the Faculty Board in terms of the Durban University of Technology.

2. 4 **Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)** means the Faculty-based subcommittee of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee.

2. 5 **Human subject & Research participant** mean an individual about whom a researcher obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or through identifiable private information/documents.

2. 6 **Minimal risk research** means projects in which the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

2. 7 **Research** means the creative investigation, conducted systematically to validate previous research findings, to contribute to new knowledge and creative outputs, and to increase scientific and technological knowledge.

2. 8 **Research Ethics** means the critical reflection and application of internationally-accepted criteria, norms and values for research conduct involving human subjects, animals, the environment and creative research in the arts.

2. 9 **Institutional Research Ethics Committee** means the subcommittee of Senate delegated with the responsibility of ensuring that all Research undertaken within the Durban University of Technology meets statutory requirements.

2. 10 **Supervisor** means a full-time or part-time staff member of the University, or an external person from industry or another university who, on account of his or her expertise or experience is directly involved in giving a student guidance in his or her studies, in respect of both technical and academic aspects, in the preparation of a dissertation or thesis to obtain a postgraduate qualification.

2. 11 **DUT** means the Durban University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended; and

2. 12 **University** means the Durban University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended.

3. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

3. 1 The aim of the Durban University of Technology Research Ethics policy is to encourage a high quality research and enterprise culture, with the highest possible standards of integrity and practice. The policy applies to all academic, contract research and administrative staff, all postgraduate research students, as also undergraduate students who are undertaking research. In short, the policy applies to all disciplines and research activities within the University, or sub-contracted on its behalf.

3. 2 All staff and students are expected to act ethically when engaged in University business. Any research involving animals, human participants, the environment, human tissue or the collection of data on individuals requires ethical consideration. This includes creative research in the arts. While particular attention must be paid to the interests of potentially vulnerable groups, such as children, the University recognizes that it has a duty of care towards *all* members of the wider community affected by its activities. The University also recognizes that it has a duty of care to its own staff, and that this includes the avoidance of harm to those undertaking research.

3. 3 The University has established a framework for research ethics governance in which its Institutional Research Ethics Committee, a subcommittee of Senate, has a central approval, monitoring and training role. It is, however, recognized that it may not always be appropriate or practicable for ethical approval to be sought from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee see (DUT IREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines on http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics). Where this is the case, the Faculty or Department must have formal, documented, procedures in place to ensure good practice and accountability. In particular, university staff have an obligation to ensure that not only their own research but any undergraduate or postgraduate student research conducted under their supervision is ethically sound. Where research projects are subject to external approval, such as the Department of Health or professional bodies, the Faculty or Department responsible must ensure that this approval is sought and given. Where approval for a project has been given by a Research Ethics Committee at another university, as may be the case with a collaborative project, the Durban University of Technology Institutional Research Ethics Committee must be provided with proof of this.

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLE

4.1 The University Research Ethics Policy is based upon widely accepted principles and practices governing research involving human participants. The key elements are:

- Minimal risk of harm to participants and researchers;
- Potential for benefit by society;

- Maintenance of the dignity of participants:
- Minimal risk of harm to the environment;
- Voluntary informed consent by participants, or special safeguards where this is not possible;
- Transparency in declaring funding sources;
- Confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and anonymity of respondents;
- Acknowledgement of assistance;
- Appropriate publication and dissemination of research results;
- Independence and impartiality of researchers.

5. RULES

5. 1 The Institutional Research Committee (IREC) is a standing sub-committee of the DUT Senate.

5. 2 The IREC independently reviews research proposals referred to it by the Faculty Research Committee (FRC); Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) and other DUT environments (e.g. the support and administration environments). The IREC also independently reviews research proposals that have been submitted by non-DUT researchers for projects in the DUT environment.

5. 3 All proposals that fall in categories 3 and involve vulnerable participants in particular as per the IREC Terms of Reference must be submitted directly to the DUT IREC (also refer to section 5 within this policy framework).

5. 4 Where research proposals involve minimal risk research, the proposals may be reviewed by the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), which is a standing sub-committee of the IREC for evaluation and approval (see section 6).

5. 5 The IREC membership and terms of reference are available on the IREC website (see http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics).

6. RULES OF THE FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES (FRECS)

6. 1 The FRECs are standing subcommittees of the IREC and hence the Chairperson of the FREC must be a member of the IREC.

6. 2 All proposals given ethics approval at FRECs must be submitted to the IREC for noting

6. 3 The FRECs review research proposals in the context of their respective faculty. Where proposals involve any of the following aspects the proposals must (mandatory) be referred to the IREC for review and approval:

6.3.1 Clinical trials;

6.3.2 Human genetic research (especially if it involves somatic/germ cell therapy, genetic manipulation, genetic screening, genetic fingerprinting or storage of blood or other tissue samples for future genetic studies);

6.3.3 Research that involves HIV studies; and

6.3.4 Research that involves vulnerable participants.

7. THE DEFINITION OF HUMAN-RELATED RESEARCH

All human-related research which includes one or more of the following requires ethical assessment and approval at the appropriate level:

i. Direct involvement through physically invasive procedures, such as the taking of blood samples;
ii. Direct involvement through non-invasive procedures, such as laboratory-based experiments, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, observation.
iii. Indirect involvement through access to personal information and/or tissue;
iv. Involvement requiring consent on behalf of others, such as by parents for a child participant.

7.1 Vulnerable Participants

Some participants may be particularly vulnerable to harm and may require special safeguards for their welfare. In general, it may be inappropriate for undergraduates to undertake research projects involving such participants.

Particularly vulnerable participants might be:

i. Infants, minors and the aged;
ii. Students;
iii. People with physiological and/or psychological impairments and/or learning difficulties;
iv. People in poverty;
v. Relatives of sick, or recently–deceased, people;
vi. People with only a basic/elementary knowledge of the language of the researcher;

8. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND RESEARCH COUNCILS

8. 1 All research undertaken under the auspices of the Durban University of Technology must meet statutory requirements. Of particular relevance is the South African legislation (e.g. Child Act, National Health Act), Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (Department of Health, South Africa).
8. 2 Researchers in particular disciplines/professions should comply with any research ethics guidelines set out by their professional associations.
8. 3 Research Councils, charitable trusts and other research funding bodies in some cases require an undertaking from grant applicants that research proposals involving human participants have been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee or another appropriate body. Some also require audited compliance with their guidelines.

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

9. 1 DUT Institutional Research Ethics Committee: Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines;
9. 2 DUT Institutional Research Ethics Committee: Terms of Reference;
9. 3 Generally accepted Research Ethics Guidelines;
9. 4 Declaration of Helsinki, World Medical Association;
9. 5 International ethics guidelines for biomedical research involving human subjects, Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences;
9. 6 Medical Research Council (South Africa) Guidelines on Ethics for Medical Research: Booklet series: 1) General Principles; 2) Reproductive Biology and Genetic Research; 3) Use of Animals in Research; 4) Use of Biohazards and Radiation; and 5) HIV Vaccine Trials;
9. 7 Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa): Research Code;
9. 8 Department of Health, Republic of South Africa: 1) Ethics in health research: Principles, structures and processes; and 2) Guidelines for good practice in the conduct of clinical trials with human participants in South Africa;
9. 9 TUT, SU and Greenwich University Research Ethics Policies;
9. 10 DOH Guidelines

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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