

Zhib 'Tshol: RUB Research Policy and Guidelines

Section I: Research Policies

Overview : ADD RCR as the DRIVING PRINCIPLE OF WHOLE doc.

The Zhib 'Tshol: RUB Research Policies and Guidelines of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) provides a comprehensive framework to promote and support responsible conduct of research activities in the University. It seeks to uphold the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and innovation while fostering an environment conducive to impactful and responsible research. It sets forth principles and procedures to promote high-quality research, enhancing the University's reputation as a hub for knowledge creation, innovation and societal development.

The policy encompasses research governance and compliance, detailing processes for approvals, reporting and evaluation, and managing conflicts of interest. It also provides clear guidelines on the researchers' code of conduct and ethical principles with particular focus on protecting the human and animal research subjects, environmental sustainability, and transparency and accountability in the dissemination of research findings.

Additionally, the policy also provides detailed guidelines on several key operational aspects. It includes clear protocols for the ownership, protection and sharing of research data, emphasising respect for intellectual property rights, privacy and confidentiality, particularly when dealing with proprietary information. Mandatory health and safety standards for all research activities are also given due focus, to ensure the well-being and safety of all participants in research activities. In addition, it also lays emphasis on the need for transparency, accountability, and compliance with funding regulations.

For research projects, patents, licensing, or commercialised products, the policy outlines a fair and transparent revenue-sharing model ensuring equitable distribution among researchers, colleges, and the University, incentivising innovation while supporting institutional growth and sustainability.

The policy also promotes collaborative research, encouraging partnerships both within the country and with international individuals or organisations. These collaborations shall support capacity building and foster long-term partnerships, and enhance the scope and impact of research.

By implementing this Research Policy, the University ensures a holistic approach to managing research activities, demonstrating a commitment to excellence, ethical responsibility, and meaningful contribution to the socio-economic development of the country.

Abbreviations

AB	Academic Board
APA	Annual Performance Appraisal
APRC	Academic Planning and Resources Committee
AREC	Animal Research Ethics Committee
AuRG	Annual University Grant
CAC	College Academic Committee
Col	Conflict of Interest
Co-I	Co-Investigator
CRC	College Research Committee
DeARS	Department of Academic and Research Services
DPD	Definite Programme Document
DPR	Department of Planning and Resources
DRIL	Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages
IRD	International Relations Division
EREC	Environmental Research Ethics Committee
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IP	Intellectual Property
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBC	National Biodiversity Centre
NSB	National Statistical Bureau
OVC	Office of the Vice Chancellor
PI	Principal Investigator
PVC	Pro-Vice Chancellor
R&D	Research and Development
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
REBH	Research Ethics Board of Health
REF	Research Endowment Fund
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RIC	Research and Innovation Committee
RO	Research Officer
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
TK	Traditional Knowledge
TRP	Tangible Research Property
UC	University Council

VC Vice Chancellor

Chapter 1: Foundational Principles

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This chapter establishes the foundational principles guiding research at the Royal University of Bhutan. It sets out the standards of professional conduct, ethical behaviour, and academic integrity expected of all individuals engaged in research activities within the University. The chapter defines the scope of the Zhib 'Tshol: RUB Research Policy and Guidelines and outlines the core values that underpin responsible research practice, including honesty, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, respect, and accountability. It also clarifies the responsibilities of researchers in conducting, managing, and disseminating research in a manner that upholds ethical standards, protects intellectual integrity, and respects legal and institutional requirements. Through these principles, the University seeks to foster a research environment that promotes integrity, professionalism, societal responsibility, and the advancement of knowledge for the benefit of Bhutan and the global community.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 The Zhib 'Tshol: RUB Research Policy and Guidelines shall apply to:

1.2.1.1 All research activities of the University, whether award-bearing or non-award-bearing.

1.2.1.2 Staff and students, visiting researchers and fellows working within the University or as part of a team associated with the University, or anyone using University resources.

1.3 Underlying values

- 1.3.1 Accuracy: Present research findings with precision, ensuring clarity and rigour while minimising errors.
- 1.3.2 Efficiency: Use resources wisely and efficiently.
- 1.3.3 Fairness: Apply clear standards that are fair to all members of the University community.
- 1.3.4 Honesty and integrity: Communicate information truthfully and fulfil commitments with integrity.
- 1.3.5 Inclusiveness: Ensure equal access to research opportunities and resources to foster capacity-building, cooperation, and community outreach.
- 1.3.6 Morality and Ethics: Conduct research with a commitment to maximising benefits for society, minimising harm to sentient beings, and upholding fundamental human values.
- 1.3.7 Objectivity: Base conclusions on evidence, allowing facts to speak for themselves, and avoid undue bias.
- 1.3.8 Respect: Acknowledge the incremental and participatory nature of research and respect the contributions and varying perspectives of others.
- 1.3.9 Responsibility: Ensure every person in the academic community is personally accountable for taking action when any breach of integrity occurs.

- 1.3.10 Scholarship and Professionalism: Uphold academic and professional standards aligned with global best practices.
- 1.3.11 Trust: Inspire confidence in persons and systems within and beyond the university that enable a free exchange of ideas.

1.4 Policy

- 1.4.1 The university is committed to fostering a research environment that promotes research integrity and the responsible conduct of research.
- 1.4.2 Researchers associated with the University shall:
 - 1.4.2.1 Aim to make research outcomes relevant and beneficial to contemporary and emerging problems and issues, and strive to make a positive impact on communities in the country and beyond.
 - 1.4.2.2 Maintain honesty and integrity in all aspects of research, including designing research plans, generating and analysing data, applying for funding, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of collaborators and others, while refraining from introducing any bias into the results.
 - 1.4.2.3 Refrain from plagiarism, fabrication, falsification of results, piracy or infringement of intellectual property rights.
 - 1.4.2.4 Ensure that their work is not influenced by conflicts of interest arising from their personal, political, or financial involvements.
 - 1.4.2.5 Respect the secrecy of all confidential information obtained in the course of their research, unless otherwise approved by law or clients.
 - 1.4.2.6 Share the professional reports, statements, or testimony gained through their research work transparently and truthfully.
 - 1.4.2.7 Respect the professional reputation, prospects, practice, or employment of other researchers.
 - 1.4.2.8 Be accountable to society, their profession, the University, staff and students involved, and the funding agency for the research work undertaken.
 - 1.4.2.9 Conduct themselves with fairness and in good faith towards clients and others, and give and accept credit where it is due, and provide honest and constructive professional criticism.
 - 1.4.2.10 Practise the judicious use of resources belonging to the public, employers, or clients.
 - 1.4.2.11 Stay informed to ensure continued competence, contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field, and create opportunities for their professional growth and that of their subordinates and fellow researchers.
 - 1.4.2.12 Conduct themselves professionally and responsibly while representing the University and the country in any national and international forum.

- 1.4.2.13 Observe the standards of practice and conduct, set out in guidelines published by funding bodies, academic and scientific societies and other relevant professional bodies.
- 1.4.2.14 Abide by legal requirements, including health and safety legislation, data protection and applicable privacy rights.
- 1.4.2.15 Obtain methodological and ethical approval for their research work from relevant entities.

1.4.3

Chapter 2: Research Administration

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 This chapter outlines the governance and administrative structures that support and manage research activities at the University. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of different bodies at the University and college involved in research governance, coordination, and oversight. Through these structures, the University seeks to ensure efficient research management, strengthen institutional research capacity, and foster a vibrant and accountable research environment. While each body reflected in this chapter has broader roles and responsibilities, the ones outlined in this chapter are directly relevant to the research mandates.

2.2 University Level

- 2.2.1 University Council (UC): The UC, as the apex governing body of the University, lays down policies and provides directions and support for the efficient functioning of the University.
- 2.2.2 Academic Board (AB): The AB is the primary academic authority of the University responsible for academic affairs, including academic standards, research, scholarship, teaching, and programmes at the University.
- 2.2.3 Academic Planning and Resources Committee (APRC): The purpose of the APRC is to review and integrate academic and resource planning in support of the University's objectives. The Committee considers and acts upon the proposals for the allocation of resources.
- 2.2.4 Research and Innovation Committee (RIC): The RIC is the standing committee of the AB that promotes research and innovation in the University.
- 2.2.5 Research Degrees Committee (RDC): The RDC ensures the standards and quality of the registration, progress, and examination of students registered for research degrees. It is also responsible for the development and implementation of all academic quality assurance systems governing the registration, monitoring, and examination of research degrees.
- 2.2.6 Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC)
- 2.2.6.1 Vice Chancellor (VC): The VC provides strategic direction to the University and encourages the development of a vibrant research environment. The VC also explores new avenues for the enhancement of research at the University and supports the establishment of external research linkages.
- 2.2.6.2 Pro-Vice Chancellor (Planning and Resources): The PVC (Planning and Resources) supports the University's research mission and enhancement of

research activities at the University by mobilising resources. The PVC supports the VC in overseeing research and innovation.

- 2.2.6.3 Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic and Research): The PVC (Academic and Research) guides the University's research and academic mission and supports the enhancement of research and academic activities in the University. The PVC supports the VC in overseeing research and academic affairs.
- 2.2.6.4 Department of Academic and Research Services (DeARS): The DeARS at the OVC is led by the PVC (Academic and Research) and serves as the secretariat to both the RIC and the RDC. It is responsible for coordinating and consolidating research activities by identifying research needs and developing appropriate strategies. The department works closely with research committees, centres, and individuals to develop and implement research policies, guidelines, procedures, and infrastructure. It stimulates and facilitates research across the University, overseeing the function of the College Research Committee (CRC), research centres, and research degrees. Additionally, DeARS maintains centralised records of all research activities at the University.
- 2.2.6.5 Research and Development Division (R&DD): The R&DD is a central body responsible for strengthening research governance and capacity. It regulates and monitors the research activities in the University through the development and implementation of policies. It also serves as the Secretariat to the RIC.
- 2.2.6.6 International Relations Division (IRD): The IRD, under the Vice Chancellor, is responsible for coordinating and promoting institutional linkages.

2.2.7 College Level

- 2.2.7.1 College Research Committee (CRC): The CRC is the primary body at the College level responsible for all aspects of research, including the promotion, approval and monitoring for the responsible conduct of research. It fosters research and innovation at the College, aligning with the overall research goals and objectives of the University and the country.
- 2.2.7.2 President: The President is the key promoter of research activities, ensuring the smooth functioning of various research structures and bodies in the College.
- 2.2.7.3 Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages (DRIL): The DRIL is the focal person for research administration at the College, with responsibilities including quality assurance, monitoring, and reporting. The role includes overseeing the College Research Committee (CRC), coordinating research centres, managing higher

degree research programmes, and conducting research activities.

- 2.2.7.4 Research Officer (RO): The RO is responsible for implementing research policies, coordinating and managing research-related activities, including research degree programmes. The RO is also responsible for documenting and facilitating the dissemination of research outcomes.
- 2.2.7.5 Centre Head: The Centre Head is a faculty member from the College who is responsible for all matters concerning the Centre.
- 2.2.7.6 Liaison Officer (LO): The LO is responsible for all matters concerning linkages in the College.

Chapter 3: Roles and Responsibilities of Researchers and Affiliates

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This chapter outlines the roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in research activities at the University. It clarifies the expectations for key participants in the research process, including principal investigators, co-investigators, research associates, postdoctoral fellows, research candidates, students, supervisors, and research affiliates. This chapter also defines their respective responsibilities in planning, conducting, managing, and disseminating research in accordance with the University's policies, ethical standards, and legal requirements. It also emphasises collaboration, accountability, mentorship, and responsible use of research resources.

3.2 Policy

- 3.2.1 Researchers are expected to conduct their work in a manner that upholds the values of the University community and the international community of research and scholarship.
- 3.2.2 Researchers shall foster an atmosphere of academic freedom by promoting free, open, and timely exchange of information about their research activities with the University's research management structures, research community (staff and students) and the international community of research and scholarship.
- 3.2.3 Researchers shall:
- 3.2.3.1 Comply with all relevant government regulations, University policies and funding conditions.
 - 3.2.3.2 Be responsible for obtaining appropriate approval, including ethics and site clearance, before conducting research.
 - 3.2.3.3 Ensure responsible collection, management, analysis, and storage of research data.
 - 3.2.3.4 Conduct research in accordance with established ethical standards and principles of integrity.
 - 3.2.3.5 Disseminate research findings accurately, transparently, and responsibly.
 - 3.2.3.6 Engage in effective and respectful collaboration with research partners and stakeholders.
 - 3.2.3.7 Utilise research resources efficiently and responsibly.
 - 3.2.3.8 Ensure research contributes positively to society and minimise potential harm.
 - 3.2.3.9 Take steps to minimise direct or indirect harm to research subjects, whether physically, psychologically, spiritually, or emotionally.
 - 3.2.3.10 Uphold the highest standards of objectivity and professional conduct if they are entrusted

with the responsibility of mentoring students and supervising staff.

- 3.2.3.11 Avoid hiring their students or supervisees when researchers are involved in business ventures, unless all potential conflicts of interest are mitigated and/or transparently disclosed; and disclose any outside affiliations, particularly in the research proposals and academic publications, which have the potential for Col.

3.2.4 The Principal Investigator shall:

- 3.2.4.1 Be allowed to recruit contract/adjunct faculty/teaching assistants/research assistants to minimise teaching workload during the project period. Nonetheless, the payment must be made from the project.
- 3.2.4.2 Promote practices and processes to apply for grants, develop budgets, submit proposals, and track financial transactions, as mentioned in the guidelines.
- 3.2.4.3 Undertake any research activities only upon the approval of relevant entities.
- 3.2.4.4 Follow and ensure the highest ethical standards among the project team.
- 3.2.4.5 Use established protocols concerning the planning, execution, and dissemination stages of the research, as mentioned in the guidelines.
- 3.2.4.6 Ensure that the management of research information and reporting is accurate.
- 3.2.4.7 Report expenditures, as required by the University and the research sponsor, in a timely and accurate manner and in compliance with all established terms and conditions.
- 3.2.4.8 Ensure that all relevant assurances and obligations are fulfilled.
- 3.2.4.9 Submit a timely research report to relevant entities.
- 3.2.4.10 Provide active mentoring and training to novice researchers.

3.2.5 Co-Investigator (Co-I) shall:

- 3.2.5.1 Assist in promoting practices and processes to apply for grants, develop budgets, submit proposals, and track financial transactions.
- 3.2.5.2 Follow the established protocols concerning the planning, execution, and dissemination stages of the research.
- 3.2.5.3 Take on the role of the PI in the absence or resignation of the PI, based on the approval of relevant entities. However, a qualified faculty member may be appointed as PI if all Co-Is are found not qualified to be PI.
- 3.2.5.4 Contribute their expertise in specific areas of the project.

3.2.6 Research Associates and Fellows shall:

- 3.2.6.1 Follow University and College policies related to research, including all guidelines.
- 3.2.6.2 Support the development of grant applications, budgets, and proposals, track financial transactions, and report expenditures as required by the University and the research sponsor in a timely and accurate manner in compliance with all established terms and conditions.

3.2.7 Research Candidates and Students

- 3.2.7.1 PhD and Master's by Research students shall adhere to the provisions outlined in the Research Degrees Framework of the University.
- 3.2.7.2 The research work for Master's by coursework and undergraduate students shall be guided by the Definitive Programme Document (DPD).
- 3.2.7.3 The research candidates/students applying for external funding for their studies shall seek approval from the CRC.

3.2.8 Undergraduate students, including those studying diploma programmes, shall:

- 3.2.8.1 Be allowed to avail opportunities to join faculty research programmes as research assistants after considering academic workload and time availability, without academic credit.
- 3.2.8.2 Seek out a faculty member as a supervisor for their research ideas without academic credit.
- 3.2.8.3 Understand that any research work beyond the academic requirement will be on a voluntary basis or a financial compensation may be given dependent on the budget specifics of a research grant.
- 3.2.8.4 Acquire training on research ethics and health and safety protocols.
- 3.2.8.5 Draw clarity on the full terms of their engagement on a PI's research team prior to commencing work, including: work expectations and outputs, level of intellectual vs. labour contribution to the project, and acknowledgement and credit for work done, including potential authorship on publications.

3.2.9 Research Supervisor

- 3.2.9.1 Experienced researchers shall work as research supervisors for the University students/candidates, and, where relevant, for students/candidates enrolled in other universities.

Chapter 4: Protection of Research Subjects

4.1. Overview

- 4.1.1 This chapter establishes the ethical principles, responsibilities, and institutional mechanisms for protecting research subjects involved in research conducted at the University. It outlines the safeguards required to ensure the rights, dignity, and welfare of human participants, the humane treatment of animals used in research, biosafety in research, and the protection of the natural environment. The chapter also emphasises the responsibility of researchers to respect public interests, national values, and cultural sensitivities while conducting research.

4.2. Research Subjects

- 4.2.1. The University shall ensure that all research activities are conducted responsibly, safely, and in compliance with ethical, legal, and institutional standards through defined ethical review processes and oversight bodies.
- 4.2.2. The University shall maintain a shared responsibility between its administrative structures and researchers to promote a culture of respect and trust in protecting the rights and welfare of research subjects. While the right to intellectual inquiry is fundamental to academic freedom, when such inquiry involves research subjects, it is considered a privilege rather than a right.
- 4.2.3. The University shall institute a Research Ethics Board (REB) with specific committees, such as the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), the Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC), and the University Biosafety Committee (UBC) and sub-committees thereof, to ensure responsible and ethical conduct of research.
- 4.2.4. The REB, ACUC and UBC shall have the mandate to review, approve and issue ethical clearance for all research activities to ensure adherence to research integrity and standards.
- 4.2.5. The University shall provide ethics assessment and clearance services to researchers from outside the University.

4.3. Human Subject in Research

- 4.3.1. Any research proposal that involves human subjects shall be subjected to review by HREC at the OVC or by the HREC sub-committee at the College.
- 4.3.2. The HREC or Sub-committee shall review, approve and issue ethical clearance for all research activities involving human subjects.
- 4.3.3. The HREC shall be convened for any research proposal requiring full board review and REB sub-committee for exempt or expedited review.
- 4.1.1. The HREC shall consist of at least five individuals, including expertise from medical or behavioural sciences, while the sub-committee shall comprise of three members, including DRIL.
- 4.1.2. The HREC and sub-committee shall have the authority to approve, require modification for approval, and decline ethical clearance for a research proposal.

4.4. Animal Subject in Research

- 4.4.1. Any research proposal that involves animal shall be subjected to review by ACUC at the OVC or by the ACUC sub-committee at the College.
- 4.4.2. The ACUC or Sub-committee shall review, approve and issue ethical clearance for all research activities involving animals.
- 4.4.3. The ACUC shall be convened for any research proposal requiring full board review and ACUC sub-committee for exempt or expedited review.
- 4.4.4. The University's ACUC shall have at least five members, consisting of one expert representative from Colleges that deal with animal sciences and a veterinarian for their service on the ACUC.
- 4.1.3. The ACUC and sub-committee shall have the authority to approve, require modification for approval, and decline ethical clearance for a research proposal.
- 4.4.5. The ACUC shall:
 - 4.1.3.1. Inspect the institution's animal research facilities and handling procedures for research.
 - 4.1.3.2. Receive and verify concerns raised about the care and use of animals in research.
 - 4.1.3.3. Suspend projects if they are not conducted in accordance with national rules and regulations; and
 - 4.1.3.4. Monitor compliance through facility inspections, proposal review, and research monitoring. Non-compliance may result in suspension of research.
- 4.4.6. Researchers shall obtain the animals from legal and ethical sources.
- 4.4.7. The transportation, care, and use of animals as subjects in research shall be conducted in accordance with applicable government laws, policies, and guidelines.
- 4.4.8. Procedures involving animal subjects in research shall be designed and performed with due consideration of their relevance to human or animal health, the advancement of knowledge, or for the benefit of human wellbeing.
- 4.4.9. The animals selected for a procedure shall be of an appropriate species and desired quality and the minimum number required to obtain valid results. Where possible, methods such as mathematical models, computer simulation, and in-vitro biological studies should be considered.
- 4.4.10. Proper use of animals shall include the avoidance or minimisation of discomfort, distress, and pain when consistent with sound scientific practices and is imperative for activities at the University.
- 4.4.11. Procedures with animals that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress should be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anaesthesia, unless scientifically justified and approved by the ACUC. Surgical or other painful procedures shall not be performed on an unanaesthetised animals.
- 4.4.12. Methods of euthanasia must be consistent with the recommendations of national rules and

regulations, unless a deviation is justified for scientific reasons by the researcher or instructor and approved by the ACUC.

4.4.13. The living conditions of animals shall be appropriate for their species and contribute to their health and comfort, unless a deviation is scientifically justified and approved by the ACUC.

4.4.14. The housing, feeding, and care of all animals used for research, teaching, or testing purposes shall be directed by a veterinarian or other appropriately trained individual experienced in the proper care, handling, and use of the species being maintained or studied. Animal health care services must be available as needed.

4.4.15. Where exceptions are required in relation to the provisions of these ethical principles, the decisions shall be made only by ACUC.

4.4.16. The researcher shall:

4.4.16.1. Abide by the principles of the Three Rs: Replacement (using non-animal alternatives where possible), Reduction (minimising the number of animals used), and Refinement (improving procedures to enhance animal welfare and minimise suffering).

4.4.16.2. Refrain from research involving invasive procedures or trauma to live animals.

4.4.16.3. Refrain from animal research that may harm the sentiments of nearby community members.

4.4.16.4. Not use intrusive research methods on wild animals.

4.4.16.5. Be allowed to research endangered species with prior consent from relevant entities.

4.4.16.6. Maintain records of animal acquisition, housing and care, experimental procedures, veterinary treatments and mortality records.

4.4.16.7. Be appropriately qualified and experienced to conduct procedures on living animals. Adequate arrangements must be made for their in-service training, including the proper and humane care and use of animals.

4.4.16.8. Be required to undergo training in animal handling, welfare principles, biosafety, and ethical research practices.

4.5. Biosafety Policy

4.5.1. Any research proposal that involves biosafety concerns shall be subjected to review by UBC at the OVC or by the UBC sub-committee at the College.

4.5.2. The UBC or sub-committee shall review, approve and issue ethical clearance for all research activities bearing biosafety concerns.

4.5.3. The UBC shall be convened for any research proposal requiring full board review and UBC sub-committee for exempt or expedited review.

4.5.4. The UBC shall consist of at least five members, consisting of BSO from each RUB college, a microbiology expert, a molecular biology/recombinant DNA expert, a plant biosafety expert, and an animal biosafety expert.

- 4.1.4. The UBC and sub-committee shall have the authority to approve, require modification for approval, and decline ethical clearance for a research proposal.
- 4.5.5. The UBC shall:
 - 4.5.5.1. Evaluate risk and assign biosafety levels.
 - 4.5.5.2. Review recombinant DNA and GMO work in accordance with WHO/UN Cartagena Protocol.
 - 4.5.5.3. Adopt emergency plans for biological spills and exposure incidents.
 - 4.5.5.4. Review incidents, exposures, and biosafety violations.
 - 4.5.5.5. Advise the university on biosafety infrastructure needs (BSCs, autoclaves, PPE, waste systems).
 - 4.5.5.6. Review incident investigations and corrective action plans.
- 4.5.6. The colleges, as relevant, shall appoint a BSO responsible for day-to-day implementation, compliance verification, inspections, record maintenance, and incident coordination.
- 4.5.7. All research and related activities shall be conducted in a manner that protects the environment, biodiversity, and ecosystems by adhering to a precautionary approach; complying with national laws and obtaining necessary clearances; preventing unintentional release or contamination; ensuring safe waste management; and minimising ecological disturbance during field and laboratory work.
- 4.5.8. All laboratory work involving biological materials shall be preceded by a formal, documented risk assessment evaluating biological hazards, transmission pathways, laboratory procedures, and exposure risks. Risk assessments shall include hazard identification, likelihood and consequence analysis, and mitigation measures, and must be approved, regularly reviewed, and updated when changes occur.
- 4.5.9. The University shall permit laboratory work only at Biosafety Levels 1 and 2, with appropriate containment, safety practices, and personal protective measures. Activities at Biosafety Levels 3 and 4 are prohibited unless formally approved by national authorities and supported by compliant facilities.
- 4.5.10. All personnel shall adhere to standard laboratory practices to ensure biosafety, including maintaining hygiene, proper conduct, safe handling of materials, and prevention of contamination and exposure.
- 4.5.11. Appropriate personal protective equipment shall be mandatory for all laboratory personnel, with minimum and task-specific requirements enforced.
- 4.5.12. Researcher shall ensure that laboratory equipment are properly operated, routinely maintained, and regularly validated to ensure safe and effective functioning, with mandatory documentation of use and maintenance.
- 4.5.13. Biological waste shall be segregated, treated, and disposed off safely using approved methods to prevent environmental contamination and exposure risks, with strict protocols for handling sharps and hazardous materials.
- 4.5.14. All laboratories shall implement standardised emergency response procedures for spills,

exposures, and system failures, ensuring immediate containment, reporting, and medical response where necessary.

- 4.5.15. All biosafety incidents, exposures, and near misses shall be reported promptly and investigated, with corrective actions implemented to prevent recurrence.
- 4.5.16. All personnel shall undergo mandatory biosafety training prior to laboratory access, with periodic refresher and specialised training and proper maintenance of training records.
- 4.5.17. Access to laboratories, particularly higher-risk facilities, shall be restricted to authorised personnel, with controlled entry, supervised visitors, and secure management of biological materials.
- 4.5.18. The transport of biological materials shall follow strict containment, labelling, and regulatory requirements for both internal and external movement, in compliance with national and international standards.
- 4.5.19. All biosafety-related activities shall be fully documented, including risk assessments, training, equipment logs, incidents, and inventories, and records shall be retained for a minimum of 5 years.
- 4.5.20. Non-compliance with biosafety policies shall result in appropriate enforcement actions, including suspension of access, disciplinary measures, termination of activities, and reporting to authorities where required.
- 4.5.21. Laboratory Supervisors and Principal Investigators (PIs), responsibilities include:
 - 4.5.21.1. Conducting and signing off risk assessments.
 - 4.5.21.2. Ensuring lab personnel are trained and competent.
 - 4.5.21.3. Maintaining SOPs specific to research activities.
 - 4.5.21.4. Ensuring corrective actions are implemented.
 - 4.5.21.5. Supervising students during experiments at all times.
- 4.5.22. Laboratory Personnel and Students shall:
 - 4.5.22.1. Follow all established SOPs and biosafety rules.
 - 4.5.22.2. Correctly use PPE and engineering controls.
 - 4.5.22.3. Report hazards, malfunctions, and unsafe behavior.
 - 4.5.22.4. Participate in mandatory training and drills.

4.6. Protection of Public Society and National Values

4.6.1. The researcher shall:

- 4.6.1.1. Not misuse the research findings and information to affect the security of the people and country;

4.1.5. Not exchange research data/information with individuals or groups either within or

- outside the country that would affect the security and image of the people and country;
- 4.1.6. Not make any judgments, decisions, and practices that are detrimental to the welfare, safety, and health of the general public;
 - 4.1.7. Inform, communicate, and educate society on issues that may be detrimental to the health and safety of the general public. Wherever possible, researchers shall also work towards the enhancement of safety, health, and social welfare of both local and the global community through sustainable practices;
 - 4.1.8. Not use any confidential information as a tool for personal gain if such action affects the interests of the public, clients, or employers;
 - 4.1.9. Maintain a fair and impartial attitude towards the public, employers and clients;
 - 4.1.10. Give due consideration to seeking advice and approval for research regarding certain subjects of national, cultural, or spiritual sensitivity that may require scrutiny or permission of officials or representatives of relevant agencies or institutions. These may include:
 - 4.1.10.1. Studies on sacred objects, sites, and locations declared protected by the Government;
 - 4.1.10.2. Studies that endanger the spiritual, cultural, and social values of the Nation; and
 - 4.1.10.3. Studies that could be potentially disrespectful to sacred institutions.

Chapter 5: Conflict of Interest

5.1 Overview

- 5.2 This chapter establishes the principles and procedures for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest in research conducted at the University. It outlines the responsibilities of researchers and affiliates to recognise situations where personal, financial, intellectual, or professional interests may influence, or appear to influence, their research activities and decisions. The chapter describes institutional mechanisms for disclosure, review, and mitigation of conflicts of interest to ensure that research is conducted objectively, responsibly, and in accordance with the University's policies and professional standards.

5.3 Policy

5.3.1 Conflict of Interest

- 5.3.1.1 The University is an institution of public trust and its staff shall carry out their academic and research activities in ways to uphold the integrity and trust of the University. Researchers and affiliates have a responsibility to declare any conflict of interest (Col).
- 5.3.1.2 This transparency shall be the cornerstone of maintaining trust, fairness, and integrity in research endeavours.
- 5.3.1.3 Researcher shall be required to disclose Col to avoid potential biases and to allow for open scrutiny, preventing skewed results and biased treatment, fostering a level playing field, upholding objectivity and safeguarding research credibility.
- 5.3.1.4 Col disclosure enhances compliance with regulations and protects researchers from legal or ethical repercussions, safeguarding public well-being and empowering collaborative efforts within the research community.
- 5.3.1.5 University staff involved in research activities shall declare a conflict of interest prior to submission and implementation of research project.
- 5.3.1.6 Individuals involved in research have a responsibility to undertake training and education in responsible research conduct, including responding to conflicts of interest.
- 5.3.1.7 Researchers shall declare the potential for conflicts arising from all possible interests which may include but are not limited to the following:

- i. Financial interests, including cash, services, and equipment;
- ii. Paid or unpaid professional positions or advisory roles;
- iii. Affiliations including membership, advisory group, or board of directors;
- iv. Professional relationships; and
- v. Family and personal relationships.

5.3.1.8 A conflict of interest may inappropriately affect, or be perceived to affect the aspects of research conduct including project approval and fund allocation, research design and methods, dissemination, peer review, and supervision of staff/students.

5.3.2 Financial Conflicts

5.3.2.1 The researchers shall:

- i. Be permitted to benefit financially from their work. The University encourages researchers to use copyrights, patents, and licenses to put research ideas to use for the good of the public, subject to the Intellectual Property (IP) policy.
- ii. Comply with the Financial Rules and Regulations of the University and RGoB where relevant to avoid potential financial conflict of interest.
- iii. Disclose to the Intellectual Property Management Office on a timely basis the creation or discovery of all potentially patentable inventions created or discovered from research activities or with more than incidental use of University resources.
- iv. Not improperly influence fundamental obligation to truth and honesty due to vested interests and the prospect of financial gain.
- v. Ensure that financial interests serve as a way of ensuring that the public's investment in research is used to benefit society and stimulate economic growth.

5.3.3 Conflict of Commitment

5.3.3.1 The researcher shall:

- i. Maintain a physical presence on campus throughout each semester of active duty, unless approved otherwise by the competent authority.
- ii. Not allow other professional activities to detract from their allegiance to the College and University.
- iii. Honour time commitments as agreed in the grant or contract; not use resources of the University or personnel, including facilities, staff, students or other mentees, equipment, or confidential information to advance private interests unless approved otherwise by the competent authority.
- iv. Not inappropriately use their institutional research affiliation to advance their private interests.
- v. Not take advantage of being a resident expert to sell his/her research products to the University without following the due processes outlined in the tendering documents.

5.3.4 Personal and Intellectual Conflicts

5.3.4.1 The researcher shall:

- i. Avoid bias in proposing, conducting, reporting, and reviewing research.
- ii. Carry out review of grants and publications submitted by work colleagues and students with objectivity, basing judgement solely on the documents provided, while serving as reviewers.
- iii. Foster an atmosphere of academic freedom by promoting open and timely exchange of results of scholarly activities by responding to all reasonable requests.

5.3.5 Responding to Identified Conflicts of Interest

5.3.5.1 The RIC shall serve as the primary committee to review conflicts of interest or appoint independent administrators tasked with the responsibility of overseeing conflicts of interest.

5.3.5.2 The researcher shall develop a conflict of interest mitigation plan for the study for approval by CRC.

5.3.5.3 If a conflict of interest has occurred resulting in research misconduct, the policies mentioned in the misconduct chapter shall apply.

Chapter 6: Data and Material Handling

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 This chapter establishes the principles and responsibilities for the proper management of research data and materials at the University. It outlines the standards for data ownership, collection, protection, storage, and sharing to ensure the integrity, reliability, and ethical use of research information. The chapter emphasises the importance of accurate documentation, secure storage, and responsible handling of research data, tools, specimens, and equipment throughout the research lifecycle. By promoting transparent and accountable data management practices, the University aims to safeguard research integrity, support verification and reuse of data, and ensure compliance with institutional, legal, and ethical requirements.

6.2 Policy

- 6.2.1 The University shall require a clear data storage and ownership mechanism for all the research data collected.

- 6.2.2 A data repository shall be maintained at OVC and Colleges to securely store research data.

6.2.3 Data Ownership

- 6.2.3.1 The University shall:

- i. draw an agreement with the funder/collaborating partners regarding the data ownership;
- ii. claim ownership rights over data collected with funds given either to the University or to individual researchers, unless agreed otherwise;
- iii. maintain rights and obligations to retain control over the data unless a written agreement has been approved by the CRC;
- iv. ensure that data remains in the University even when the researchers leave the University, as it holds ultimate responsibility for budgets, regulatory compliance, contractual obligations, and data management; and
- v. ensure that a written agreement regarding the data ownership is sought when data is obtained from a third party.

6.2.4 Data Collection and Recording

- 6.2.4.1 The researcher shall:

- i. Use the most appropriate and reliable methods for data collection.
- ii. Seek clearance from relevant agencies prior to conducting the research.
- iii. Keep clear and accurate records of the procedures followed and the approval granted during the research process, including records of interim results obtained as well as of the final research outcomes.

- iv. Maintain evidence of data collected.

6.2.5 Data Protection

6.2.5.1 The researcher shall:

- i. Have a proper data storage and protection system from accidental damage, loss, or theft.
- ii. Ensure that the samples are appropriately saved/stored and efforts are made to record, document, and protect data extracted, for degradable samples.
- iii. Ensure that information confidentiality is maintained to ensure that privacy is honoured by using random codes instead of details that will lead to identification.
- iv. Ensure that, unless otherwise agreed in writing, privacy shall be maintained in perpetuity.
- v. Retain research data for a minimum period of 7 years following the submission of the completion report unless approved otherwise by a competent authority.
- vi. Liaise with the DRIL Office to support centralised research data retention in the College.

6.2.6 Data Sharing

6.2.6.1 The University shall reserve the right to share data owned by the University unless agreed otherwise.

6.2.6.2 The University obliges its researchers to share data when a reasonable request through proper procedure is made. However, exceptions shall be made for the following:

- i. Preliminary data that has not been validated;
- ii. Data that has no immediate public benefit; and
- iii. Data with compelling reasons for confidentiality.

6.2.6.3 The researcher shall have the right to not share their data until their research findings have been disseminated.

6.2.6.4 The proper and due acknowledgment shall be made to the University for the use of any data resulting from the research.

6.2.7 Tools, Reagents, Specimens, and Equipment

6.2.7.1 Researchers shall make appropriate use of the equipment, instruments, and apparatus for research work with due care and concern for their proper care and maintenance.

6.2.7.2 The equipment, apparatus, instruments, other associated gadgets, and any samples or specimens collected shall be the sole property of the College or the

funding agency, as agreed.

Chapter 7: Leadership, Mentoring, and Training

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 This chapter outlines the importance of leadership, mentoring, and training in fostering a strong and sustainable research culture at the University. It emphasises the responsibility of research leaders, principal investigators, and experienced researchers to provide guidance, supervision, and professional support to members of the research community. The chapter highlights the role of mentoring relationships and structured training in developing research skills, promoting collaboration, and strengthening research capacity. Through effective leadership, supportive mentorship, and continuous training, the University aims to nurture competent researchers, encourage responsible research practices, and enhance the quality and impact of research outcomes.

7.2 Policy

- 7.2.1 The University shall encourage researchers to work in teams for mutual benefit and in support of the University's vision as a favourable environment for professional development and capacity building. In this manner, the process of the research work becomes as valuable as its potential outputs.

- 7.2.2 Leaders at all levels shall have the responsibility of research leadership and mentorship as applicable.

7.2.3 Research Leadership

- 7.2.3.1 The RIC and CRCs shall ensure that appropriate leadership, direction of research, and supervision of researchers are provided.

- 7.2.3.2 Training in supervisory skills shall be provided where appropriate.

- 7.2.3.3 PI shall ensure the appropriate direction of research and its financial propriety.

- 7.2.3.4 PI shall ensure that good research practices including documentation of results, peer review of research, regular discussion, and seminars, are encouraged and that adequate supervision exists at all relevant levels.

- 7.2.3.5 PI and experienced researchers shall groom and develop the research leadership skills of their co-investigators by involving them appropriately.

- 7.2.3.6 Experienced researchers shall ensure that a research culture is created by encouraging all members of the research team to develop their skills through open exchange of research ideas.

- 7.2.3.7 Researchers shall treat their team members with respect and concern, and provide

them with a safe and congenial working environment, fair compensation, and proper acknowledgment of their contributions.

7.2.4 Mentoring and Training

- 7.2.4.1 The mentor shall be an experienced researcher who provides guidance and support to the less experienced researcher (mentee).
- 7.2.4.2 Mentoring shall begin with a clear understanding of mutual responsibility, and commitment to maintain a productive and supportive research environment.
- 7.2.4.3 The researchers working as mentors shall maintain professional relationships with their mentees and provide the required support.
- 7.2.4.4 The mentee shall undertake any duty associated with the mandated job with due diligence to acquire the skills and expertise expected to be achieved.
- 7.2.4.5 The training related to research shall be provided based on the research priorities and needs of the University and College.
- 7.2.4.6 The researchers shall upgrade their research skills and expertise to produce impactful research outputs.

Chapter 8: Health and Safety

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 This chapter outlines the principles and responsibilities for ensuring health and safety in research activities at the University. It establishes measures to safeguard the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of researchers, participants, and others involved in research. The chapter emphasises the importance of identifying potential hazards, adopting precautionary approaches, and complying with institutional and regulatory health and safety standards. By promoting safe research practices and responsible risk management, the University seeks to maintain secure research environments and protect the well-being of all individuals engaged in research.

8.2 Policy

- 8.2.1 The University shall:

- 8.2.1.1 protect the health and safety of researchers by providing safe workplaces and appropriate gear;
- 8.2.1.2 identify and provide information about health and safety hazards to the researchers;
- 8.2.1.3 encourage researchers to report potential risks and hazards;
- 8.2.1.4 ensure that the above health and safety practices are the responsibility of individual researchers;
- 8.2.1.5 ensure that the researchers and the CRC shall take the precautionary approach to any potential risks to researchers or research subjects that may arise in the course of conducting research work;
- 8.2.1.6 ensure that all Colleges have specific health and safety guidelines concerning the provision of health and safety measures for specific research locations, safe disposal of hazardous substances during research, and provision for access to Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for staff working in situations with potential risk to health and safety;
- 8.2.1.7 uphold the Occupational Health and Safety policy outlined in the Human Resource Rules and Regulations of the University.

Chapter 9: Research Planning, Approval, and Monitoring

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 This chapter outlines the procedures and responsibilities related to research planning, approval, and monitoring at the University. It establishes the processes required to ensure that all research activities are carefully planned, reviewed, and conducted in accordance with institutional policies, ethical standards, and national development priorities. The chapter clarifies the roles of relevant committees and offices in reviewing research proposals, granting approval, and monitoring research progress and outcomes. The policy serves as strategic guidance for the overall research direction in the colleges, ensuring compliance with research policies and procedures in alignment with the national development priorities.

9.2 Policy

- 9.2.1 All research activities shall undergo systematic planning, approval, and continuous monitoring to ensure they are conducted ethically and in full compliance with University policies and regulations.
- 9.2.2 All research carried out by University members and affiliates, whether using any University resources or not, is implicitly backed by the University and reflects on its reputation, and as such, shall be carried out only after approval by designated University bodies.
- 9.2.3 Research approval shall be required regardless of whether the project is funded through the College, University, external source, self-funded, or carried out with no specific input of funds. However, approval for research does not guarantee funding support.
- 9.2.4 All research carried out in the University shall have a registration number assigned by OVC or DRIL office, as applicable.

9.2.5 Research Planning

- 9.2.5.1 The Presidents, DRILs, CRCs, and Head of Centres shall identify research priority areas and funding shall be earmarked accordingly. RIC may also identify priority areas, in line with the University and National research goals.
- 9.2.5.2 The University shall encourage at least one Co-I for University and College funded research projects.
- 9.2.5.3 The research priority areas shall be determined based on:
- i. Generation of new knowledge: Possibility of generating new knowledge or innovation;

- ii. Relevance: Relevance of research to programmes, departments or the College;
- iii. Need: Need for such research from the local, national, and international perspectives;
- iv. Feasibility: Capacity to conduct research by the College and its faculty, including expertise, facilities and resources, and funding; and
- v. Impact: Possible impact of research on policy and local, national, and international communities.

9.2.6 Research Review and Approval

9.2.6.1 Research proposals from the College shall seek approval from the CRC, while proposals from OVC shall be processed through R&DD, DeARS.

9.2.6.2 The PhD and Master's by Research candidates shall apply for approval following the established procedures stated in the Research Degrees Framework.

9.2.6.3 Students of Master's by coursework with some research components and undergraduate students required to undertake research shall seek approval from the Programme Committee (PC) and update the CRC accordingly.

9.2.6.4 The researcher shall submit their research proposal to the CRC for scientific merit review if it is funded by the University or College.

9.2.6.5 All researchers shall submit complete research proposals in the prescribed format for review and approval by the CRC.

9.2.6.6 The CRC shall complete the review processes within three weeks.

9.2.7 Review Outcomes

9.2.7.1 The CRC shall review all University/College-funded research proposals for scientific merit.

9.2.7.2 Proposals that does not have scientific merit shall be declined and communicated to the PI.

9.2.7.3 Proposals that have potential for approval shall be subjected to ethical review by the ethics committees as applicable.

9.2.7.4 The outcome of the ethical review process shall be shared with the PI as follows:

9.2.7.5 Approved: Implement the project as planned

9.2.7.6 Approved with minor changes: Make suggested changes or provide justifications.

9.2.7.7 Declined

9.3.15 Research Registration: All research proposals must be registered with the DRIL Office,

which will then issue a registration number. This number shall be used in all transactions related to the research.

9.2.8 Research Monitoring and Completion

- 9.2.8.1 The CRC shall ensure that the research is conducted as proposed and approved.
- 9.2.8.2 The PI shall seek approval of the CRC for any significant deviations particularly when there are changes to proposals involving research subjects.
- 9.2.8.3 The researcher shall follow the University Research Block Grant Policy all research work that is awarded by the College and the University.
- 9.2.8.4 The researcher shall submit periodic research reports to the CRC in the form of:
 - i. A progress report halfway through the research using the approved reporting form.
 - ii. A completion report along with the financial report upon completion of the work.
- 9.2.8.5 The researcher failing to submit the completion report or financial report or unsuccessful completion of the research study as per the approved proposal shall be barred from applying for College/University Grant for the next three years.
- 9.2.8.6 A statement of grants received shall be submitted to the CRC for all funded projects, from within the University or from external sources.
- 9.2.8.7 The staff engaged in any research activities outside the University shall seek approval of the CRC.
- 9.2.8.8 CRC shall follow up on allegations of misconduct promptly, as and when they arise.
- 9.2.8.9 CRC shall report annually on research activities to the R&DD, DeARS.

9.2.9 Research grievance and appeals

- 9.2.9.1 Researchers shall have the right to appeal against any decisions or raise concerns regarding unfair treatment related to research activities.
- 9.2.9.2 The researcher shall be allowed to appeal to the PC, CRC, RIC, and Academic Appeals Committee (AAC).

Chapter 10: Research Collaboration

10.1 Overview

10.1.1 This chapter outlines the principles, procedures, and responsibilities governing research collaboration at the University. Recognising the value of collaborative research in advancing knowledge, innovation, and institutional visibility, the University encourages partnerships within the institution and with national and international organisations. The chapter provides guidance on establishing, managing, and monitoring collaborative research activities, including agreements on roles, responsibilities, authorship, intellectual property, and data management. By promoting transparent and mutually beneficial partnerships, the University aims to strengthen interdisciplinary research, enhance capacity building, and ensure that collaborative initiatives align with institutional priorities and national interests.

10.2 Policy

10.2.1 The University shall encourage and facilitate collaboration, both within and with external universities or organisations.

10.2.2 Regardless of the nature of the collaboration, the University shall maintain oversight of a collaborative project by requiring approval and monitoring.

10.2.3 Collaboration with an external body shall require adherence to the rules and regulations of the University and the collaborator's institution.

10.2.4 Collaborative research in the University shall be with a researcher who is affiliated with research institutions, universities, or other organisations with credibility and capability to engage in research.

10.2.5 The collaborators shall establish an agreement of roles and relationships with regard to management, communication, finance, authorship, intellectual property, data ownership, compliance, training, and supervision prior to undertaking the project. The agreement shall also specify roles related to ethics and safety considerations, confidentiality, reporting to appropriate agencies, dissemination of research outcomes, and managing conflicts of interest.

10.2.6 Criteria for establishing linkages are:

10.2.6.1 Compatibility with the University: Any agreement with an external institution shall be structured to protect the basic values of the University and the Nation, and align in principle with the University's strategic plans.

10.2.6.2 Relevance and need: The areas of collaboration shall be relevant to the

University in general and the College in particular.

- 10.2.6.3 Recognition: The collaborating institution shall be a recognised institution, such as universities, industries and non-governmental organisations.
- 10.2.6.4 Institutional Linkage: The collaboration shall be between the University/College and the external institution. However, collaboration at the individual level shall also be encouraged within the institutional linkage framework.
- 10.2.6.5 Duration of Collaboration: The collaboration duration shall be dependent on the scale and scope of the collaboration and may be reviewed and renewed on mutual agreement.
- 10.2.6.6 Mutual Benefit: The collaboration shall benefit both the institutions, in terms of research outputs accomplished, capacity built, knowledge generated and exchanged, and innovation achieved.
- 10.2.6.7 Cost-effectiveness and sustainability: The collaboration shall be cost-effective and sustainable.
- 10.2.7 All joint research or studies shall require prior approval of CRC, and depending on the nature of the collaboration, approval may have to be sought from the Head of the Agency in the College/University.
- 10.2.8 University staff who are involved in formal collaborative research projects shall be aware of, and comply with, all policies and written agreements affecting the project, and must seek advice from the CRC and DRIL, who may refer to the University's International Relations Division (IRD).
- 10.2.9 A project management unit/team may be formed, if deemed necessary, depending on the project size and scope.
- 10.2.10 Any IP, credit or revenue sharing arising from the collaboration must be clarified in writing prior to commencing the collaboration.
- 10.2.11 Collaborators shall submit mid-progress and completion reports to CRC.

10.3 Internal Collaboration

- 10.3.1 The CRC of the College where the PI is based shall be the focal point for administration, and the collaborating college will be informed accordingly.
- 10.3.2 For proper approval and monitoring of the collaborations, the PI shall submit a comprehensive proposal document signed by both parties using the Research Collaboration Guidelines.

10.3.3 The CRC of the focal College shall be required to assess the proposal using the *Collaborative Research Assessment Form*.

10.4 External Collaboration

10.4.1 University staff involved in formal collaborative research projects shall be aware of, and comply with, all policies and written agreements affecting the project, and must seek advice from their CRC and/or DRIL.

10.4.2 Effective collaboration shall be based on a clear understanding of roles and relationships, which shall be established at the outset by discussing and agreeing on the details of the collaborative arrangement.

10.4.3 Any external research collaboration in the colleges shall be vetted by the CRC based on the Research Collaboration Template (Annexure H-1) submitted by the PI, if no prior approval for collaboration exists.

10.4.4 The document, depending on the nature of the collaborative project, shall be forwarded to the International Relations Division (IRD), OVC, for approval.

10.4.5 In case of the research initiated by the OVC, the DeARS, OVC, shall take all necessary steps as per the existing norms.

10.5 Completion of Collaborations

10.5.1 Upon completion of the collaboration, the project team lead shall submit a completion report to CRC for onward sharing with DeARS, OVC, with a copy to IRD, OVC, where relevant.

10.6 External (International) Researchers Interested in Conducting Research in Bhutan

10.6.1 The University shall facilitate international researchers to conduct research studies in the country in areas that it may deem essential. All such research may be carried out only after the agreements have been signed and guidelines are in place to ensure the protection of research areas in Bhutan and the fair credit sharing of the work of any Bhutanese researchers involved.

10.6.2 Any conduct of research by universities, organisations, or individuals of foreign origin with the University shall require a Co-researcher from the University. Therefore, the DRIL Office or the R&DD, DeARS will assist in the identification of relevant co-researchers from the University.

10.6.3 The identification of a co-researcher shall precede the Office of the Vice Chancellor's/College's invitation of research experts from a foreign university or an individual.

- 10.6.4 A supervisor from the parent institute and a co-supervisor from the host institution shall be identified for a foreign student researcher.
- 10.6.5 Administrative costs, including visa fees, student card, accommodation, food, travel, and field visit, shall be determined by the respective College/OVC based on variables and borne by the foreign collaborator.
- 10.6.6 In the case of foreign student researchers, the DRIL Office or the R&DD, DeARS shall identify a co-supervisor from RUB colleges and a supervisor from the parent institute.

Chapter 11: Research Fund

11.1 Overview

11.1.1 This chapter outlines the policies and procedures governing research funding, revenue generation, and financial incentives at the University . It defines key concepts such as research-based services, consultancy, sponsored work, grants, and revenue sharing, providing a framework for the ethical management and utilisation of funds. The University and colleges maintain research funds, administer block grants, and ensure fair net revenue sharing between researchers, colleges, and the University. The chapter also specifies policies for intellectual property commercialisation, co-owned IP, royalties, and licensing, including transparent calculation of gross and net revenue, internal distribution, and long-term entitlement of creators and enablers.

11.2 Policy

11.2.1 The University shall explore and establish sustainable research funds and shall encourage colleges, staff, students, and other researchers to secure funds from various sources to conduct research.

11.2.2 The University shall establish a system to fairly compensate researchers for the effort and time required to secure a research fund and implement the work successfully.

11.2.3 Regardless of the source of the research fund, the University retains its regulatory authority and oversight by requiring approval and monitoring.

11.2.4 The University shall provide a conducive environment to enable researchers to focus on the actual research and, where possible, reduce the administrative workload.

11.2.5 For all sponsored research, the University shall ensure transparency, fairness, and effective collaboration while protecting the interests of all involved stakeholders. Sponsored research facilitates partnerships, promotes innovation, and ensures ethical conduct across various sectors.

11.2.6 Research Block Grant

11.2.6.1 The Research Block Grant shall:

- i. Be a sum of money released to an individual or a research team to enable efficient use of funds based on research outcomes.
- ii. Be disbursed in tranches based on the progress of the research work.
- iii. Promote practice-oriented research through compensations to staff who carry out field-based, on-campus and experimental-based research.
- iv. Be expected to ease the administrative procedures for researchers.

- v. Apply to College and University funded research projects.

11.2.7 University Research Fund

- 11.2.7.1** The University shall maintain university-wide research grants such as the Annual University Research Grant (AURG) and the Research Endowment Fund (REF) subject to the availability of funding, which will be available on a competitive basis for applicants from Colleges/OVC.
- 11.2.7.2** Grant applications from the member colleges shall be accepted for review only after scientific merit screening and recommendation by the CRC.
- 11.2.7.3** Applications by OVC staff shall be submitted directly to the DeARS, and research progress will be monitored accordingly.
- 11.2.7.4** The research proposal shortlisted for a grant award shall be subjected to ethical review by the ethics committee at the University or sub-committee at the college level, as appropriate.
- 11.2.7.5** The research grant for the selected research proposals shall be released upon submission of the ethical clearance.
- 11.2.7.6** Research awards shall be monitored through the CRC upon submission of mid-term and completion reports.
- 11.2.7.7** The release of grants shall be based on the Research Block Grant Policy.
- 11.2.7.8** The F&A cost exemption for the research grant released for a research project may be granted by the CRC based on the justification provided by the PI.
- 11.2.7.9** All researchers shall disseminate their findings or results through conference presentations, seminars, posters, journal publications, or policy briefs upon completion of the project.

11.2.8 College Research Fund

- 11.2.8.1** The DRIL Office, in consultation with CRC and Centre Head(s), shall set aside an annual operating budget for research and development activities in the College.
- 11.2.8.2** The DRIL Office shall be responsible for administering the Annual College Research Grant (ACRG) and may allocate the fund among priority areas, as appropriate.
- 11.2.8.3** The DRIL Office shall be responsible and accountable for the management and utilisation of the R&D budget in the College.
- 11.2.8.4** The ACRG shall be awarded on a competitive basis and subject to receiving

ethical clearance.

11.2.8.5 The Research Block Grant Policy shall be applied in the release, utilisation, and monitoring of ACRG.

11.2.8.6 The college research funds shall also be used for capacity-building in research, seminars, and research facilities.

11.2.8.7 The F&A cost shall not apply to college-funded research.

11.2.8.8 Each college shall develop guidelines for the ACRG.

11.2.9 Sponsored Work

11.2.9.1 The University shall encourage staff and students to seek funding from appropriate public or private, local or international sources to support research, research-based services, and consultancy.

11.2.9.2 The University may accept funds from any legal and reputable sources where there is no conflict with the University or National policies and after careful consideration of potential ethical issues and conflict of interest.

11.2.9.3 The University shall not accept funds from sources bearing vested interest, potential risk of altering the findings, affecting the reputation of the University and future funding opportunities, and compromising the objectivity of the research.

11.2.9.4 Those involved in seeking funds shall recognise that research funds are accepted by the University on their behalf and thus tie the University's reputation to that of the funding source.

11.2.9.5 Researchers must recognise that funding sources may differ in their commitment to independent research. Accepting funding from certain sources could potentially harm or undermine the University's reputation and its freedom to conduct research and reach independent conclusions.

11.2.9.6 The University shall support all efforts to actualise benefits from researchers' efforts.

11.2.9.7 The University shall administer all sponsored work based on funds coming into the University.

11.2.9.8 Funds of sponsored work from foreign organisations or countries shall be routed following the existing norms.

11.2.9.9 All sponsored work with a formal agreement shall submit a project outcome report to the International Relations Division (IRD) in the Office of the Vice Chancellor

for subsequent submission to the relevant Ministry.

11.2.9.10 To ensure transparency, the DRIL Office shall share and upload the summary of the sponsored work undertaken by the College on its website.

11.2.10 External Research Project

11.2.10.1 The PI shall be allowed to recruit contract/adjunct faculty/teaching assistant to minimise the teaching workload during the project period. Nonetheless, the payment shall be made from the project.

11.2.10.2 The PI shall be allowed to hire a project coordinator on contract, based on the need and provision of the project.

11.2.10.3 If agreeable to the sponsor, the Research Block Grant policy shall be implemented.

11.2.11 Consultancy

11.2.11.1 The University shall accept deposit work as consultancy from agencies/organizations.

11.2.11.2 The University shall establish a formal agreement with potential national and international agencies that require consultancy services until such time as the University secures a consultancy license.

11.2.12 Research-Based Service

11.2.12.1 A college shall offer research-based services to the relevant community by developing guidelines on the usage and fair cost of the services provided.

11.2.13 Revenue Sharing

11.2.13.1 All research projects funded by external agencies shall follow the terms and conditions agreed with the sponsoring agency.

11.2.13.2 Researchers shall be allowed to forgo salary from the College if there are provisions for salaries and stipends from the project. The financial benefits shall be as per the provisions mentioned in the project.

11.2.13.3 The Facilities & Administrative (indirect) costs rate applicable consistently across all Colleges/OVC shall be a minimum of 10% of the total cost or as determined by the project agreement.

11.2.13.4 Fellowships and scholarships awarded to the college, meant as salaries/stipends to support students, postdoctoral fellows, and research associates, shall not be

subject to F&A costs.

11.2.13.5 The net residual fund from sponsored work, such as research, research-based services, and consultancy, provided collectively or individually, shall be shared as follows:

- i. For College: The residual fund of the project shall be shared as 70% to the Researcher (s), 25% to the College and 5% to the University
- ii. For Office of the Vice Chancellor: The residual fund of the project shall be shared as 70% to the Researcher (s), 30% to the University
- iii. The residual fund shall be deposited into the research and development budget head, which shall be used to promote research activities or to support the researcher in carrying out post-research activities such as dissemination, exploitation, and scaling.

11.2.14 Calculation of Gross Revenue, Expenses, and Net Revenue from Intellectual Property (IP) shall be as per the provisions outlined in the IP policy.

Chapter 12: Research Misconduct

13.1 Overview

13.1.1 This chapter defines research misconduct, including fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and outlines the University's commitment to promoting responsible research conduct. It establishes procedures for assessing, inquiring, and investigating allegations of misconduct while ensuring confidentiality, fairness, and due process for all parties. Policies cover reporting mechanisms, protection of whistle-blowers, temporary suspension of respondents, disciplinary actions, and referral of criminal conduct to law enforcement. The chapter safeguards research integrity, accountability, and ethical standards across the University.

13.2 Policy

13.2.1 The University shall foster an environment that promotes the responsible conduct of research, to deter unethical behaviour in research and scholarship and promote the integrity and credibility of academic endeavours.

13.2.2 Research misconduct shall lead to a variety of disciplinary actions, including, in severe cases, the expulsion of a student, dismissal of staff, civil or criminal proceedings.

13.2.3 Research misconduct shall include violation of regulations related to authorship, publication, peer-review, retaliation, misuse of funds and resources, mishandling of intellectual property, obstruction to investigation, research code of conduct, failure to report misconduct and filing a false report.

13.2.4 When any individual (complainant) has reasonable grounds to believe, in good faith, that research misconduct is occurring or has occurred, the concern must be reported to the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

13.2.5 The RID/DRIL office shall conduct an assessment and inquiry into any allegations of misconduct received formally.

13.2.6 RIC/CRC shall function as the primary authority and may form a sub-committee to investigate misconduct and take appropriate disciplinary actions.

13.2.7 Any respondents shall be presumed innocent and shall be entitled to a multi-phase process (assessment, inquiry, investigation, recommendations for further proceedings) to establish whether misconduct has occurred.

13.2.8 The inquiry of misconduct shall be coordinated by the DRIL Office and based on the findings and recommendation of the inquiry, the CRC or a sub-committee of the CRC shall conduct the investigation of the alleged misconduct.

- 13.2.9 Inquiries, investigations and any subsequent proceedings shall commence promptly and with care and sensitivity as soon as practicable.
- 13.2.10 The CRC shall ensure confidentiality and prevent reprisal against the person (whistle-blowers) reporting misconduct.
- 13.2.11 Research misconduct allegations shall not be made public until they have been fully investigated and confirmed. However, if the misconduct poses a threat to public health and safety, such as misconduct in a medical (clinical) trial, it shall immediately be brought to the attention of the person heading the project or to the appropriate authorities.
- 13.2.12 Any person alleged for research misconduct shall be temporarily removed from the research work until the investigation is completed and outcome determined.
- 13.2.13 Any cases that are not resolved at the College shall follow due process of appeal to the RIC and AAC of the University.
- 13.2.14 Any criminal conduct shall be forwarded to law enforcement agencies.
- 13.2.15

Chapter 13: Research Publication and Dissemination

14.1 Overview

14.1.1 This chapter establishes the University's policies on research publication and dissemination, promoting ethical, high-quality, and impactful scholarly outputs. It defines various publication types, including journals, books, book chapters, technical reports, and conference proceedings, and sets standards for peer review, authorship, and open-access dissemination. The University emphasises double-blind review, avoidance of predatory journals, and accurate attribution of contributions. Policies also cover amendments, refutations, and the responsible handling of errors. Additionally, the chapter encourages capacity-building for journal management, training for researchers, and the organisation of conferences, seminars, and symposia to foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and academic excellence.

14.2 Policy

- 14.2.1 All research/book publications bearing the name of the University or Colleges shall be required to undergo a peer-review process to ensure quality and credibility.
- 14.2.2 Peer reviewers shall be mindful of the public as well as the professional consequences of their evaluations and must adhere to internationally accepted standards.
- 14.2.3 The publications done in predatory/cloned journals shall not be recognised.
- 14.2.4 Every author shall maintain an online research profile to increase the visibility of publications.
- 14.2.5 All publications in any form by the staff shall be submitted to the DRIL Office for official record.
- 14.2.6 The University shall encourage the exploration of open-access publishing options to widen the reach and impact of research findings.
- 14.2.7 The journal publications of the University shall uphold standards of publication by adhering to the standards outlined in the Framework for Standard Journal Publications.
- 14.2.8 The DeARS shall ensure compliance with the Framework for Standard Journal Publications of the academic journals under the University and submit a periodic report to RIC.
- 14.2.9 The journal publication of the University shall strive to be indexed in reputable international journal databases.
- 14.2.10 All journals maintained by the University shall convene an editorial board meeting prior to

the publication of any issues to ensure and enhance the quality of publications.

14.2.11 The researchers shall share the results of their work with colleagues and the public in a variety of ways.

14.2.12 Compensation shall not generally be a part of peer review, but rather a universally reciprocated unwritten agreement of participation by academics. However, if the University or Colleges request numerous reviews requiring a large input of time from some individuals, some compensation may be offered.

14.3 Refutations

14.3.1 University publications shall allow targeted commentary of published works, allowing for refutations and readers' criticism of primary research papers.

14.3.2 University publications shall consider and publish refutations (in concise form) if and only if the author provides compelling evidence that a major claim of the original paper was incorrect.

14.3.3 A refutation shall be published in the next possible issue as a Correspondence.

14.3.4 Refutations over interpretation and other matters arising shall be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief of the journal concerned.

14.4 Amendments to Published Articles

14.4.1 An amendment shall be published for intentional or unintentional errors in the published work through formal printed and online notice in the journal issue.

14.4.2 All amendments shall also carry DOIs both online and in print to help ensure that indexers and other repositories of scholarly articles will have a reliable link from an amendment to the original article to which it refers.

14.4.3 Readers wishing to draw the journal's attention to a significant published error shall submit a "Correspondence".

14.4.4 The errors shall be rectified through publications in the form of corrigendum, erratum, addendum, and may also be retracted or removed as appropriate.

14.5 Authorship

14.5.1 The authors listed on papers shall fairly and accurately represent the person(s) responsible.

14.5.2 Authorship shall be limited to individuals who have made significant intellectual contributions in the form of research conception, design, data collection and analysis,

interpretation, manuscript drafting or revision, final approval of the manuscript, and agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

- 14.5.3 Any publication arising from collaborative research shall be guided by a prior formal agreement among all members of the research team regarding the authorship and order.
- 14.5.4 The primary authorship for publications related to student projects, dissertations, and theses shall be given to students.
- 14.5.5 The students shall have the right to be the principal author for research publications arising from a thesis, dissertation or research project. However, in the case the student is unable or desires not to publish, the supervisor may be allowed to publish after obtaining written permission, and the student shall be included as a co-author.

14.6 Improper Practices

- 14.6.1 The University shall not tolerate improper publication practices in the form of honorary authorship, ghost authorship, salami publication, duplicate publication, predatory publications, and premature public statements.

14.7 Training

- 14.7.1 The University shall support or offer capacity-building training for journal managers, editorial board members, and reviewers to enhance the efficiency of journal management and the quality of publications.

14.8 Research Event

- 14.8.1 The University shall host research conferences, seminars, and symposiums to foster interdisciplinary collaborations, knowledge exchange, and professional development among researchers, scholars, and practitioners.
- 14.8.2 The University shall organise training relevant to research.

Chapter 14: Research Centres

15.1 Overview

- 15.1.1 This chapter outlines the purpose, structure, and governance of theme-based Research Centres within the University. Research Centres aim to enhance research capacity, provide infrastructure, foster collaborations with industry and external partners, and promote the University's research reputation. Centres are led by appointed Centre Heads, responsible for research direction, budget, and activities. They support research groups, training, and dissemination, and host conferences and seminars. Regular reporting, web presence, and triennial reviews ensure accountability, sustainability, and alignment with institutional priorities.

15.2 Policy

- 15.2.1 A theme-based research centre(s) in the colleges is aimed at developing suitable research infrastructures, enhancing research capacity and support, and help in maintaining a sustainable financial base for research activities.
- 15.2.2 The Research Centre will support linkages with specific industries and enhance the research reputation of the University and its academics.
- 15.2.3 The Research Centre shall be headed by a Centre Head under the supervision of the DRIL.
- 15.2.4 The Centres shall explore and pursue collaborative research and services with relevant external partners.
- 15.2.5 Research Centres shall strive to maximise the amount of externally funded research conducted at the University, with the goal of achieving substantial self-funding.
- 15.2.6 Research Centres shall be responsible for research, dissemination, and documentation related to their field.
- 15.2.7 The Centre shall lead international, national, and college-based conferences and seminars.
- 15.2.8 Centres shall function as infrastructure for stimulating research in the College by providing research training, supporting the formation of research groups of personnel with similar research interests, helping researchers formulate proposals, providing forums for informal research discussions, and promoting research-informed teaching and learning.
- 15.2.9 The Research Centre shall help facilitate and promote University-Industry relations at the

College level.

- 15.2.10 The establishment of a Research Centre shall be routed through the CRC and shall be endorsed by the RIC and approved by the AB.
- 15.2.11 The Research Centre establishment guidelines shall encompass vision, mission, governance structure, research theme, resources, and activities with success indicators.
- 15.2.12 The Centre Head shall be a faculty member from within the College and shall be responsible for all matters concerning the Centre and shall hold status as that of the Head of Department.
- 15.2.13 The Centre Head shall be appointed by the CRC for a term of three years, extendable upon recommendation of the CRC based on their performance
- 15.2.14 The Centre Head shall be responsible for the budget, research direction, and resourcing of the Centre.
- 15.2.15 All Research Centres shall establish and maintain a web presence on the college website.
- 15.2.16 Research Centres shall submit an annual report to the CRC for onward reporting to the RIC.
- 15.2.17 A comprehensive review of Research Centre activities shall be conducted by the RIC or an RIC-formed review committee every three years, at which point the Research Centre shall submit a full report of its performance of the past three years as well as its next three-year plan.
- 15.2.18 The RIC shall provide recommendations regarding the continuation or closure of the Research Centre to the AB.

Chapter 15: Intellectual Property (IP) Policy

17.1 Overview

17.1.1 The purpose of the RUB Intellectual Property (IP) Policy is to foster innovation and creativity among staff and students by providing guidance on identifying, protecting, and managing IP. It promotes the translation of research into products, services, and processes for societal and economic benefit while ensuring fair recognition and benefit-sharing among creators and the University. The policy safeguards academic freedom and open scholarship within the framework of national and international IP laws. It also supports sustainable institutional development through responsible IP use and balances commercialisation with public interest to advance societal well-being.

17.2 Policy

17.2.1 RUB shall establish an IP Committee and an Intellectual Property Management Office (IPMO) in the Office of the Vice Chancellor to oversee IP protection, capacity building, commercialisation, and revenue sharing.

17.2.2 The University shall own IP created by staff and students in the course of employment or using substantial University resources, unless otherwise governed by contracts.

17.2.3 Incentives shall be categorised into Financial and Non-financial Incentives.

17.2.4 The Net IP Revenue shall be disbursed as follows:

17.2.4.1 50% to creators

17.2.4.2 Remaining 50% shall be distributed within the University for further research (10%), IPMO (10%), IP prosecution and maintenance costs (15%), and overheads for OVC/College (15%).

17.2.5 Non-financial incentives shall include, but not be limited to, awards, formal recognition, promotion, reduction in the teaching workload, and entrepreneurship support.

17.2.6 All potentially protectable IP shall be disclosed promptly to the IPMO prior to publication or external engagement.

17.2.7 The University shall promote licensing, assignment, and spin-off creation while managing conflicts of interest.

17.2.8 Commercialisation Pathways shall include:

17.2.8.1 Licensing to third parties

17.2.8.2 Assignment of IP rights

- 17.2.8.3 Creation of start-ups or spin-off companies
- 17.2.8.4 Social deployment through government, NGOs, or communities
- 17.2.9 Upon receipt of disclosure, IPMO shall:
 - 17.2.9.1 Conduct preliminary screening (ownership, funding obligations)
 - 17.2.9.2 Assess novelty, protectability, and value
 - 17.2.9.3 Evaluate commercial, societal, or strategic potential
- 17.2.10 Recommend one of the following actions:
 - 17.2.10.1 Protection and commercialisation
 - 17.2.10.2 Protection for non-commercial or strategic use
 - 17.2.10.3 Release to public domain
 - 17.2.10.4 Assignment of ownership to creator(s)
- 17.2.11 The decision shall be communicated to the creator(s) within a reasonable timeframe, normally within 60–90 days.
- 17.2.12 Each team member involved in the development of IP shall specify and document their individual roles and contributions in the event of any legal action or dispute.
- 17.2.13 Recognition as an author in a publication shall not automatically imply creatorship or inventorship of the associated intellectual property.
- 17.2.14 Creators involved in commercialization entities shall disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- 17.2.15 Management plans for commercialization shall be approved by the IP Committee.
- 17.2.16 Creators shall retain the right to publish scholarly works, subject to prior IP clearance where protectable IP may be disclosed.
- 17.2.17 The university shall own course materials created by staff, except open educational resources (OER), where creators shall retain non-exclusive rights for teaching and research.
- 17.2.18 All IP involving Traditional Knowledge shall comply with national laws and community consent requirements.
- 17.2.19 Transfer of research materials or data to or from external entities shall be managed through IPMO using approved Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs).
- 17.2.20 Authors, creators, and contributors shall have the right to appeal any perceived unfair treatment or dispute to the Intellectual Property Management Office (IPMO), which shall

review the matter and, where necessary, refer it to the appropriate legal authority for further action.

- 17.2.21 The University shall promote IP awareness through training, workshops, and guidance materials for staff and students.

Glossary of Terms