

# Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

## Research Policy

### 1. Purpose

This policy sets the framework for the development and implementation of research policy at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL) within which academic staff carries out their required research obligations, and in which both undergraduate and graduate students can engage and be supported in their research.

### 2. Organizational Scope

This is a University-wide policy.

### 3. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply.

**Research:** Research is mainly focused on searching knowledge. It is focused to find facts, find new ideas, solve problems and develop new theories/ prove existing theories, without limiting to boundaries of any school of thoughts, by systematic investigation. Therefore, research is a process that includes systematically collection of data or information, analyzing and interpreting them systematically and finally reaches into the conclusions that are proven scientifically.

**Principle Researcher:** Any permanent academic staff member of the SUSL

**Co Researcher:** Any permanent academic staff members of the SUSL, person awarded honorary academic status by SUSL, Student of SUSL, person otherwise associated with the University in research from other university, research institute, as an employee of any other relevant institution.

### 4. Preamble

Need of a broad policy framework for research is identified by the University Senate of SUSL. The Research Policy addresses the following specific aspects of the operation of research within the University.

- Requirement to Undertake Research
- Research Policy and Practice
- Research Management
- Resources in Support of Research
- Eligibility of University Research Fund
- Responsibilities of the Researches
- Responsibilities of the Committees
- Requirements for maintaining a safe and ethical research environment
- Maintenance of research records, and data storage and retention

- Confidentiality provisions relating to research;
- Publication and authorship;
- Conduct of research by students;
- Conflict of interest;
- Handling of research misconduct and fraud.
- Disbursement of funds faculty wise
- Authority of each faculty in research

## **5. Requirement to Undertake Research**

5.1 All academic staff has the right and are required to conduct research and engage in scholarship and to publish their findings.

5.2 All academic staff has the right to and should, where appropriate, seek research funds in support of their research.

5.3 The requirement to undertake research is a career expectation and over time will be balanced as appropriate with the other obligations of academic staff including significant administrative responsibilities.

5.4 Nothing in this policy is to be construed to prevent Heads of Departments from allocating teaching and other responsibilities in the light of the research record of academic staff.

## **6. Research Policy and Practice**

6.1 The University aims to establish a sound research environment within the university that will promote a high standard of professional conduct of its researchers, and a culture of research practice that is ethical, competent, safe and accountable.

6.2 Research within the University should be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Research Guidelines, with relevant legislation and guidelines, with this Research Policy and with other University and UGC policies, guidelines and procedures on research matters.

6.3 The Director of the Center for Research and Knowledge Dissemination (CRKD) will be responsible for monitoring observance of the Policy on Research across the University and reporting to the Research Sub Committee of the Senate through the Vice-Chancellor on any significant issues that may arise with regard to the conduct of research.

6.4 The Deans of Faculties will be responsible for ensuring the Research Policy is implemented within the relevant faculty and for monitoring its observance.

6.5 The Dean of a Faculty will be responsible for:

(i) Implementing the Research Policy within the faculty, and ensuring that researchers are made aware of their responsibilities with regard to complying with it;

(ii) Chair the Faculty level Research committees and ensure its active function

(iii) Ensuring that the Faculty develops, and operates within guidelines, procedures and strategies that will promote good research practice, as required, to address research issues within the Faculty that are not covered elsewhere by University policies and guidelines;

(iv) Ensuring that researchers are informed about, and have the opportunity to undertake, induction and training that will equip them to conduct their research in accordance with appropriate professional standards that apply in their research area/s;

6.6 Patent/Copyrights/etc.: If SUSL pays for patent and patent maintain, the patent rights should go to SUSL. If researcher pays himself/herself for the patent and patent maintain, patent rights should go to researcher.

## **7. Research Management**

7.1 Advice and policy in research matters is coordinated through University Research Committee (URC), Faculty Research committee and Center for Research and Dissemination of Knowledge (CRDK)

7.2 The University Research Committee (URC) chaired by the Vice Chancellor is the University's superior research management body. It advises to the University Senate on research strategies to be pursued, develops policy and reviews progress in these areas.

7.3 The University Research Committee (URC) is consisted with followings members

- Vice Chancellor (Chairperson of the Committee)
- All the Deans representing the faculty research committees
- All the Senior Professors, Professors and Associate Professors
- A Senior Assistant Registrar/Assistant registrar should be appointed as the Secretary to the committee by the Vice-Chancellor
- One member from each Faculty research committee

7.4 Faculties are required to establish research committees to support the research activities of their staff and postgraduate thesis students. Faculty Research Committees will be consisted with,

- Dean of the Faculty (Chairperson of the Committee)
- All the Senior Professors, Professors and Associate Professors
- Two Senior Lecturer representing each Department
- Faculty Assistant Registrar (Secretary to the committee)

7.5 Faculty level research committees are formed by Deans to advise the URC and their own faculties.

7.6 The CRKD headed by the Director and co-ordinates the activities of the URC and provides assistance to the URC in monitoring of research grants given by the university.

7.8 The Vice chancellor Office manages the University Research Fund.

## **8. Resources in Support of Research**

8.1 There is a University Research Fund (URF)

8.2 The URF supports research that is aligned closely with national and University strategic priorities. The general principle governing the allocation of all research funding in the University is that it should be seen as an investment that will maximize the range of outcomes that the University expects to result from staff and students' research.

8.3 A portion of the URF supports early career researchers.

8.4 The amount of the research grant per research proposal will be decided by the URC periodically and submit to the University Council for approval.

8.5 The University Research fund supports funding to the University Academic Staff to present research and review papers at national and international conferences. The criteria for fund disbursement is decided by the URC subject to the approval of University Council.

8.6 The URF provides support to the University Academic Staff to publish research and review papers in indexed journals (SCI, SSCI and SCOPUS). The criteria for fund disbursement is decided by the URC subject to the approval of University Council.

8.7 External contracts/external research provisions and obligations

(i) All applications for external research funding of the academic staff are to be submitted through the Vice Chancellor and be informed University Research Committee.

(ii) The University Research Committee provides the contract and financial management services for the grant management process.

## **9. Eligibility of University Research Fund**

9.1 Any permanent academic staff of the SUSL is eligible for applying and obtaining the funds subject to the conditions applied in the research guidelines from URF for following activities.

- a. Conducting research individually or as a group of researchers
- b. Publishing the research papers in indexed (SCOPUS or SCI or SSCI), double blind peer review journals
- c. Registration fee for local or international research symposiums or conferences
- d. Travel grant to present the research findings in international research symposiums or conferences

## **10. Responsibilities of the Researchers**

10.1 Researchers must submit applications for research grants funding from the University Research Fund in accordance with guidelines established by the University Research committee.

10.2 Keep the URC and FRC informed about any external funding they have received to support their research, and comply with any conditions specified by funding bodies in respect of their research.

10.3 Keeping the URC informed of their research progress periodically

10.4 Manage the research funds as mentioned in the research guidelines and financial regulations of the university

10.5 Publishing research papers in reviewed journals and present papers in research symposiums and conferences as possible

10.6 Maintain the research ethics and confidentiality of the research data as required

10.7 Submit the final research report at the end of the research project

## **11. Responsibilities of the University Research Committees**

11.1 Approve the applications for research grants, publication fee to publish the research in refereed journals, registration fee for conferences and travel grants to attend for research conferences submitted through the Faculty research committees

11.2 Monitor the progress of research projects funded by the University

11.3 Take necessary steps to enhance the research culture in the university and to motivate academic staff to conduct research projects.

11.4 Organise workshops and training programmes on research planning, conducting, research management, publishing of research results, etc collaboration with Staff Development Center.

## **12. Requirements for maintaining a safe and ethical research environment**

12.1 Deans of Faculties in collaboration with researchers, are responsible for developing and maintaining an ethical and safe research environment in the context of each research field undertaken within the faculty. Research activities should be undertaken by a faculty only where a suitable professional environment can be achieved.

12.2 Researchers must comply with relevant legislation, guidelines, policies and directives with regard to ethical and safe practices in research.

12.3 All research involving human subjects, animals or biosafety matters must be approved and monitored by the Faculty Research Committee or University Research Committee or authorised body, as outlined below:

(i) Proposals involving experimentation with animals are to be submitted to the Animal Welfare Committee;

(ii) Proposals involving the participation of human subjects, or the use of human tissue or blood, or those that involve participation of or may impact on Indigenous peoples, are to be submitted either to the University Research Ethics Subcommittee;

(iii) Proposals involving the use of clinical drugs in research trials must be submitted to the Relevant Faculty research committee, as appropriate;

(iv) Proposals involving biosafety matters including experimentation involving genetic modification or work with a genetically modified organism; carcinogens; toxic substances; and infectious substances; must be submitted to the Relevant Faculty research committee , as appropriate;

(v) Where research is to be conducted off-campus or through an external affiliation, the University may approve an arrangement whereby a proposal may be approved and monitored by another authorised committee, and will specify the conditions under which such an arrangement will operate.

12.4 Researchers will be responsible for submitting research proposals, as required, to the committees identified in 12.3 above, in accordance with policies or guidelines specified by the relevant committee. Researchers must:

(i) Obtain relevant consents and approvals, including variations to research protocols, and maintain evidence of such approvals;

(ii) Provide relevant information about their research and research data, including progress reports, as required; and

(iii) Notify the relevant committee, and the Dean of the relevant Faculty, immediately of any adverse events or experiences in their research that may be of concern to the University in respect of ethical or safety matters

### **13. Maintenance of research records, and data storage and retention**

13.1 Research records and data must be retained and stored appropriately to enable the accuracy, veracity and basis of research findings and research methods to be tested, established and scrutinized.

13.2 The Director (CRKD) will issue guidelines specifying the University's requirements for reporting on research activities, maintaining research records and retaining and storing research data.

13.3 Each researcher will be responsible for:

(i) Reporting on his or her research activities, projects and publications, as required, through the annual Research Data Collection;

(ii) maintaining records in respect of the conduct of experimentation involving animals, human subjects or biosafety matters, in accordance with the provisions and processes identified in 12 above;

(iii) maintaining research records, and ensuring that arrangements are made for his or her research data and records to be stored and referenced in accordance with this Policy;

13.4 A researcher who uses data or research materials obtained under an agreement between the University and an external agency or institution is bound by the terms and conditions to which the University is a signatory, and is required to use the data or materials in compliance with such terms and conditions.

## **14. Confidentiality**

14.1 Access to research data may be limited by confidentiality provisions, normally for the purposes of protecting:

- A third party who is the subject of the research;
- Intellectual property that may be the subject of a commercial or contractual arrangement;
- Confidential source materials.

14.2 Any confidentiality provisions that apply to research intended for publication should, as far as possible, provide for data and records to be kept in a way that will enable a third party to have access to them without breaching confidentiality, and where practicable for data and records to be available for discussion with other researchers.

14.3 The researcher will be responsible for ensuring arrangements are made to protect the security of any confidential research data, including data held in computer systems.

## **15. Conduct of research by students**

15.1 Students conducting research must comply with the provisions contained in:

- The Policy on Research Practice;
- The University's Research Higher Degree Policies and Procedures;
- Other relevant policies and guidelines on research.

15.2 Students must report, as required, in the following ways:

(i) Maintain regular contact with appointed supervisors and complete an annual review of progress, as specified in the Research Higher Degree Policies and Procedures in the case of research higher degree students; or as specified in University or Faculty policies for students conducting research as part of another degree;

(ii) Participate in the University's Research Data Collection, as required, in accordance with instructions issued by the Director (CRKD);

(iii) Complete an Authorship Form, as required, in respect of any research to be published;

(iv) Notify the supervisor and Dean of Faculty, in advance, of any proposal to enter into a contractual arrangement or agreement for commercial or other purposes of the student's research;

(v) Submit other reports as specified by the Dean of Faculty, or in relevant University policies.

15.3 A supervisor of a student conducting research will be responsible for providing guidance to students on all matters of research practice, and ensuring that students are informed of relevant University policies and procedures that affect the conduct of the student's research.

15.4 In accordance with the Statement and Guidelines, a supervisor will be entitled to have access to research data and other relevant information about the research of a student for the purposes of undertaking normal supervisory responsibilities and ensuring compliance with this Policy and other University policies and procedures. The supervisor must:

(i) Consult with the student about the need to maintain confidentiality in respect of the student's research data, methodology, or findings; and

(ii) Ensure the integrity of the student's research data is preserved; and

(iii) Where a student is conducting research as part of a research team, inform the student at the commencement of the research project of any protocols or operating conditions that may apply in respect of the conduct of the research project, the use and storage of research data, publication of research findings, confidentiality, or commercialization or other agreements or arrangements that may apply to the research.

15.5 A supervisor will:

(i) Take such steps as are practicable to ensure the validity of a student's data and research methodology, and provide verbal and written feedback to the student on a regular basis;

(ii) Ensure appropriate induction and ongoing advice is provided to the student about professional approaches that should be adopted with regard to ensuring the validity of data, and about requirements for maintenance of records and storage and retention of research data; and

(iii) Ensure that discussions with the student on research practice are documented in the student's annual review form.

15.6 Where a supervisor has concerns about the validity of a student's data or about whether the student is undertaking appropriate record keeping or data storage or research practices, the following steps must be taken:



(i) The supervisor should provide written advice to the student, and document any steps taken by the student to address the matter;

(ii) If the matter is not addressed expeditiously, and to the satisfaction of the parties, the supervisor should advise the University research committee/ Faculty research committee and notify the student accordingly;

(iii) If the Faculty research committee is unable to resolve the matter expeditiously and to the satisfaction of all parties, the matter will be referred to the Chairperson of the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, who will consider any further action to be taken in accordance with the relevant

## **16. Conflict of interest**

16.1 Researchers must disclose to the Faculty research committee and the Director (CRKD) any affiliation with or financial involvement in any organization or entity with a direct interest in the subject matter or materials of the researcher. The researcher must identify:

- Direct benefits such as sponsorship of the research; or
- Indirect benefits which may include provision of materials or facilities; or
- Support of individual researchers through provision of travel or accommodation expenses to attend conferences, or similar benefits.

16.2 Researchers should disclose to any relevant outside parties including editors of journals, readers of published work and external bodies from which funds are sought any potential conflict of interest that could be seen to influence the research and investigations, publication and media reports, grant applications, and applications for appointment and promotion.

## **17. Handling of research misconduct and fraud**

17.1 Misconduct or fraud in research may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Fabrication of data: claiming results where none has been obtained;

(ii) Falsification of data, including changing records;

(iii) Plagiarism, including the direct copying of textual material, the use from other people without adequate attribution;

(iv) Misleading ascription of authorship, including the listing of authors without their permission, attributing work to others who have not in fact contributed to the research, and the lack of appropriate acknowledgment of the work of a student or associate;

(v) Other practices that seriously deviate from those commonly accepted within the research community for proposing, conducting or reporting research;

(vi) An infringement of the University's Policy on Research Conduct or other research related policies that is either intentional or caused by negligence;

(vii) Negligence, or failure to uphold commonly accepted standards in the conduct of research within the relevant field of research.

*(Misconduct does not generally include honest errors, or honest differences in interpretation or judgement about data)*

17.2 Once a complaint has been received the following steps must be taken:

(i) The person that receives the complaint must immediately inform the University research committee that a complaint has been received and provide any information that the complainant has presented about the matter to the University research committee;

(ii) The University research committee will consider the material that has been provided, and if necessary seek such additional information and relevant specialist expertise advice, that may be required to establish whether the matter warrants further investigation, and will either:

(a) Decide that the allegations have no substance and dismiss the complaint; or

(b) Decide that there is no evidence of misconduct or fraud, but that alternative action is required, and refer the matter for consideration and action through an appropriate University process; or

(c) Decide that the allegations require further investigation as a potential matter involving misconduct or fraud, and initiate an investigation of the matter in accordance with 18.3 below.

17.3 In the event that an investigation is to be conducted, the Vice-Chancellor will take the following actions:

(i) In the case of a member of the academic staff, refer the matter for investigation and consideration in accordance with the disciplinary provision for academic staff in the university;

(iii) In the case of a research student, refer the matter for investigation and consideration in accordance with disciplinary provision for students in the university;

(iv) In the case of a person who is affiliated with the university but who is not a staff member or a student, take such action on the matter as the Vice-Chancellor deems appropriate.

17.4 Where an allegation of misconduct is under investigation, the Vice-Chancellor will, as appropriate:

(i) Inform Research and Publication committee or other parties with a direct and legitimate interest in the matter, that the matter is under investigation, and of the status of any proceedings, and of any other matters that may be of direct concern to them; and

(ii) Take such other action as may be necessary to protect the interests of the University, and exercise a duty of care towards staff members, students, the public or any other parties involved in the matter.

17.5 In a case of misconduct, the University may, in addition to taking action in accordance with the provisions outlined above, exercise its right to take legal or other action against the researcher or a third party.

**18. Approval Agency:** University Council on Recommendation of University Research Committee

**19. Approval Dates**

This policy was originally approved by the Council at its 240<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018

This version takes effect from: 01<sup>st</sup> August 2018

This policy will be reviewed by: 01<sup>st</sup> August 2021

**20. Policy Sponsors:** Vice Chancellor, All the Deans and Director (CRKD)

*\* The Council has the power to amend the Policy*