



# HKUST (GZ) Policy on Research Conduct and Integrity

## Chapter I. General Rules

1. This Policy aims to formulate and enforce a code of professional conduct of research with the highest standard of research integrity, raise awareness and create a foundation of trust in the community that allows academic exchanges and research innovation and further pursue research excellence of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) (hereinafter referred to as the “University”).

This Policy is stipulated based on relevant government provisions, including *Several Opinions on Further Enhancing Integrity in Scientific Research*, *Measures for the Prevention and Punishment of Academic Misconduct in Institutions of Higher Education*, *Interim Regulations on Investigating and Dealing with Violations of Research Integrity*, and *Rules for Investigation and Handling of Research Misconduct*, as well as the situations of the University.

2. This Policy adheres to the following fundamental principles: 1) Preventive and punitive measures are both taken; 2) Self-discipline and supervision are equally emphasized; and 3) Violation of research integrity shall be carefully investigated and dealt with, in accordance with the full-coverage and zero-tolerance principles.
3. This Policy applies to 1) all members of the University who engage in research activities and management, including all employed faculty and staff, researchers, post-doctoral fellows, research administrative staff, students and, 2) the individuals who engage in research activities on behalf of the University, including part-time employed faculty and staff, visiting researchers, and exchange students.
4. The Vice-President (Research) (VPR) has responsibility to coordinating and managing research integrity affairs. The Research Committee has responsibility to the investigation and verdict of alleged violations of research integrity, reporting to the President.



## Chapter II. The Development and Management of Research

### Integrity

5. In the process of admissions, recruitment, performance review, and research activities, the University shall explicitly explain the obligations of research integrity and the terms of accountability for violations to researchers and students.
6. The University applies the research integrity commitment system in all kinds of research activities. Researchers engaging in research must sign a statement of research integrity and take primary responsibility for the authenticity and integrity of the experiment process and research results.
7. The VPR shall establish systematic policies of research integrity training and violation prevention, recording of research activities, research archive management, research integrity review, and research ethical reviews. VPR shall clarify the duty and responsibility of individuals or units and improve the internal supervision mechanism. VPR shall also establish a database of violations of research integrity for recording such violations and for necessary inquiry.
8. The second-level and third-level units shall educate and guide their researchers, faculty, and students about research integrity regulations and support researchers in understanding the regulations, consciously abiding by the requirements of research integrity, and conducting responsible research.
9. Researchers and research administrative staff shall adhere to relevant principles and rigorously discipline themselves. They shall comply with research ethics, abide by regulations on research activities, conduct good research practice, seek truth from facts with meticulousness, and be responsible for undertaking the research tasks, the funding source, and the public good.
10. Researchers shall strictly abide by the regulations of research ethics. For research involving human participants, human bodies, animals, artifacts, and safety issues, the Principal Investigators (PIs) of the relevant research project shall obtain approval from the respective review committee before



initiating the research to ensure that research practices are always carried out properly.

11. Researchers and research administrative staff shall take and pass the training on research integrity regularly. Completion of research integrity training will be a precondition for researchers to undertake research projects. Researchers and research administrative staff are encouraged to take more relevant training. The PIs shall ensure that all team members have completed research integrity training before engaging in research.
12. All members of the University have the responsibility to maintain the University's atmosphere of research integrity and protect the University's reputation proactively.
13. PIs and the supervisors of research graduate students shall educate and guide the team members and students on research integrity through words and deeds. They shall take ultimate responsibility to the authorship, data authenticity, and experiment reproducibility of the papers and other research outputs.
14. Reviewers, experts, consultants, and fund auditors shall be faithful to their duties and have professionalism in review and consultancy. They shall follow relevant regulations and procedures, work with honesty, conduct independently, objectively, and impartially judgment, and provide responsible, professional, and high-quality consulting and assessment comments for research activities.



## Chapter III. Violations of Research Integrity

### Section I. Academic Misconduct and General Research Misconduct

15. Academic and general research misconduct refers to fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and other violations of universally recognized research and academic norms in scientific research and academic activities. It includes the following:
- 15.1. Plagiarism, including but not limited to 1) copying all or part of others' works in one's own published research results without adequate acknowledgment in the process of research activities; 2) unauthorized use of others' academic ideas, experimental data, or findings, and publishing or disclosing others' unpublished results for personal use without authorization; and 3) false indication of original work, or take others' research results by translating or re-phrasing.
  - 15.2. Fabrication and falsification, including but not limited to 1) making up, inappropriate manipulation, or tampering conditions, data, samples, processes, conclusions, results, annotations, and references of experimental studies, such that the research is not accurately represented; 2) falsifying personal academic curriculum vitae, certificates, documents, proof of academic qualifications, review comments, and expert appraisals; and 3) deliberately changing or making up others' authorship, personal information, or academic results.
  - 15.3. Improper ascription of authorship, including but not limited to 1) listing individuals as authors without their permission or informing them; 2) making up co-authorship; 3) attributing credit of authorship to an individual where there has been no sufficient contribution towards the work; and 4) lack of acknowledgment of the work of an individual who has contributions to collective research results.
  - 15.4. Self-plagiarism and duplicate publication, including but not limited to attempting to publish or having published papers that are identical or similar in parts or the whole in two or more journals during the period in which the academic result is to be or has been published, and lack of adequate acknowledgment of the data and content reused.



- 15.5. Buying and selling papers, including but not limited to buying, selling, ghost-writing, submitting papers or project acceptance materials through the proxy, and fabricating peer review and reviewers.
- 15.6. Violations of research ethics, including but not limited to 1) experiment practices that fail to comply with requirements for the proper use and protection of human participants, animals, and artifacts; 2) data collection and use that fail to respect data privacy, data collection that are unreasonable or unnecessary, or may be harmful to the subjects; and 3) data collection, utilization, and other experiment practices involving human participants, animals, and artifacts that have not been approved by the University respective review committees.
- 15.7. Research practices that endanger national security and lack respect for the public good and human life.
- 15.8. Failure to cooperate with the supervision, inspection, and assessments; providing false materials for review; failure to rectify or failure to rectify thoroughly.
- 15.9. Failure to declare material interests or disclosure of any potential conflict of interest, either of the research or of a relationship to the sponsor of the research.
- 15.10. Colluding in or facilitating research misconduct by others; and concealment or deliberate failure to report such actions by others.
- 15.11. Other misconducts that violate the requirements of research integrity, seriously damage the University's reputation, and cause adverse impacts on society.

## **Section II. Misconduct in Research Projects**

16. Potential violations of research integrity in the implementation of research projects include:
  - 16.1. Fraudulent acquisition of science and technology projects (including special projects and general funds, etc.), research funds, prizes, and honors by bribery, disguised bribery, or providing false material in the application, evaluation,



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implementation, acceptance, supervision, examination, and assessments of science and technology activities.

- 16.2. Intentionally delaying or refusing to fulfill major obligations agreed upon in the project contract or agreement without justification.
- 16.3. Intentionally exaggerating the research readiness, academic or technical value, social and economic benefits of scientific and technological outputs, or concealing technical risks, which results in adverse impacts or loss of governmental funds.
- 16.4. Violation of research fund regulations, including misrepresenting, fraudulent claiming, transferring, misappropriating, and embezzling research funds for personal goods.
- 16.5. Outsourcing or subcontracting research tasks to others and providing benefits for specific individuals through the research project.
- 16.6. Other misconducts that violate the relevant policies of research project management.



## **Chapter IV. Procedures Governing Violations of Research Integrity**

### **Section I. Principles**

17. All departments and personnel that engage in research activities must adhere to the highest standard of research integrity. Any potential violations of research integrity in the process of recruitment, promotion, project reviews, inspections, and evaluation shall be investigated seriously and comprehensively under the principles below.
18. The VPR oversees the research integrity affairs of the University, accepts complaints, reports, or suggestions regarding research integrity, investigates and judges the allegation, and recommends corresponding sanctions.
19. If the allegation relates to research undertaken while working/studying at the University. The unavailability of an accused for any reason will not prevent the initiation or continuation of the investigation proceeding.
20. The University shall handle complaints fairly, timely, and with care and sensitivity; carry out investigations expeditiously and thoroughly, in an impartial, independent, and objective manner. It shall keep the investigation process confidential and promptly notify related parties of the result.
21. The University shall inform the accused of the allegation at the appropriate time and provide him/her with the necessary materials and the opportunity to fully respond. Before the allegation is found proven, the accused will be presumed innocent. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the investigation will not affect the accuser and the accused or result in retaliation against either party. The University shall afford anyone found guilty of research misconduct the right to an appeal.
22. The University shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the original position and reputation of the accused are preserved if an allegation is found not proven.
23. The University shall take appropriate action against frivolous or malicious accusations according to relevant regulations.
24. Once the allegation is found proven, the relevant cooperative organizations, funding agencies, publishers, and other parties shall be informed of the verdict in due course.



25. The VPR shall keep records and documents of all allegations and investigations on research integrity.

## **Section II. Reporting and Acceptance**

26. Any individuals and organizations have the right to report violations of research integrity involving the University's members.
27. A report shall be submitted in writing in real name to the VPR. The report shall contain a specific subject of the allegation, the fact of the research misconduct, and objective evidence or leads of the alleged violations.
28. The VPR shall proactively investigate and deal with all allegations of research misconduct involving the University's members reported by the media and disclosed by other academic institutions or social organizations.
29. The VPR shall decide whether to accept a report within 10 working days. If the VPR finds eligible and sufficient evidence, the allegation will be accepted, and the reporter will be informed. If not, The VPR shall clarify the reason.

## **Section III. Investigation**

30. After the allegation is accepted, the VPR shall organize an investigation team and conduct a preliminary investigation within 15 working days, including collecting evidence, interviewing the accuser and the accused, and listening to the statements or explanations of both parties.
31. If no sufficient evidence is found after the investigation, the allegation will be dismissed, and the accuser and the accused will be notified.
32. If sufficient evidence is found from the investigation to substantiate the allegation, the following actions shall be taken depending on the severity of the violation: 1) in the cases where the violation is minor, the violator may be given a verbal warning and the allegation will be closed; 2) in the cases where the violation is judged to be serious, a written allegation shall be submitted to the Research Committee with relevant evidence for further investigation, and the accused shall have a copy of alleged violations.
33. The Research Committee shall conduct a thorough investigation within 60 working days after receiving the written allegation from the VPR. When necessary, a special investigation group may be established, consisting of at





least five members (including at least three peer experts), and may appoint external peer experts to engage in the investigation or provide academic judgment as consultants. People with a potential conflict of interests or direct interests with the accuser or the accused in such relations as research collaboration, relatives, and supervisor-student relationships, shall recuse themselves from the investigation.

34. Investigation can be conducted by searching files and documents, on-site inspections, experimenting, interviewing witnesses, and questioning the accuser and the accused. The whole process of the investigation shall be recorded and stored. The Research Committee shall compose an investigation report.
35. The Research Committee will submit the report and recommend corresponding penalties to the President and formally notify the accuser and the accused in writing.
36. The President shall affirm or reject any verdict of the Committee and impose the final penalty within 20 working days of receiving the report from the Research Committee.

#### **Section IV. Determination and Penalties**

37. If the allegation is found proven, the President will make the final decision on the penalties to be taken against the violator based on the report from the Research Committee. Depending on the severity of the violation, penalties include, but are not limited to:
  - 37.1. Warning;
  - 37.2. Criticism within a particular scale or written reprimand;
  - 37.3. Termination and withdrawal of financial support for relevant science and technology activities;
  - 37.4. Withdrawal of remaining funds and disbursed governmental funds and Recovery of other illegal money;
  - 37.5. Revocation of awards or honorary titles and recovery of bonuses;
  - 37.6. Recorded in the database of severe violations of research integrity;



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- 37.7. Banning the violator from undertaking or participating in science and technology activities supported by governmental funds for a certain period;
  - 37.8. Suspension with or without pay; and
  - 37.9. Dismissal.
38. Allegations of cheating or plagiarism by students shall be referred to and dealt with under the *Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity HKUST(GZ)*.

### **Section V. Appeals**

39. Those who disagree with the decision have the right to appeal by writing to the President within 15 working days of being notified of the decision. The President will decide whether to accept the appeals and organize a re-investigation or establish a special investigation group within 15 working days after receiving the appeal.
40. Appeals proposed to the re-investigation results, with the same facts and evidence, will not be accepted.



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## Chapter V. Annexes

41. This Policy is effective from the date of publication.
42. If there is any discrepancy between the Chinese and English versions, the Chinese version will take precedence.
43. The VPR reserves the right to interpretation of this Policy.

**APPROVED BY:**

Senate of the HKUST(GZ)

**APPROVED ON:**

Thursday, 8 June, 2023

**EFFECTIVE ON:**

Thursday, 8 June, 2023

**REVIEW CYCLE:**

Annual (As Needed)