



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION POLICY

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Responsible Office or Structure	Deputy Vice Chancellor Research Innovation and Partnerships	
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	Signature	Date
Policy Review Cycle	Every three years	
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Responsible Committee	Executive Management Committee (EMC)	

ACRONYMS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

AREC – Animal Research Ethics Committee

C – Council of the University of Limpopo

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

DSI – Department of Science, Technology and Innovation

DVC: RI&P – Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships

ECS – Executive Committee of Senate

EMC – Executive Management Committee

IP – Intellectual Property

IRPGMS – Integrated Research and Postgraduate Management System

NRF – National Research Foundation

S – Senate of the University of Limpopo

SREC – Senate Research and Ethics Committee

TREC – Turfloop Research Ethics Committee

TTO – Technology Transfer Office

UL – University of Limpopo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Limpopo (UL) recognises research and innovation as core functions that contribute to knowledge generation, human capacity development, societal transformation, economic growth, and sustainable development.

The University's mission of being an African-centered, internationally engaged institution that provides solutions to Africa's problems depends heavily on research and innovation. A framework for the administration, supervision, monitoring, and assessment of research and innovation initiatives within the university is provided by this policy.

In addition to promoting research excellence, innovation, ethical behaviour, and societal impact, the policy operationalizes the University of Limpopo Research and Innovation Strategy (2026–2030) and is in line with the University Strategic Plan, Digital Transformation Strategy, and pertinent national, continental, and international policy frameworks.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) Provide a comprehensive framework for the governance, management, support, monitoring, and evaluation of research and innovation activities at the University.
- b) Promote research excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge generation.
- c) Strengthen postgraduate education, research capacity development, and research leadership.
- d) Facilitate the translation of research outputs into societal, economic, policy, and developmental impact.
- e) Promote responsible research conduct, academic integrity, and ethical innovation.
- f) Advance digital transformation and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in research and innovation.
- g) Support the University's strategic aspiration of "Finding Solutions for Africa."

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- a) All academic and professional staff involved in research and innovation.
- b) All postgraduate students.
- c) Research centres, institutes, units, laboratories, and Research Chairs.
- d) Collaborative research and innovation activities involving external partners.
- e) All research outputs, innovation products, intellectual property, and commercialisation activities undertaken under the auspices of the University.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Limpopo is dedicated to creating a thriving ecosystem for research and innovation that supports excellence, innovation, ethical behaviour, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and social impact.

In order to guarantee that research and innovation activities significantly contribute to institutional goals, national priorities, and global development agendas, the University must set up suitable governance structures, procedures, resources, and support mechanisms.

The University shall establish appropriate governance structures, systems, resources, and support mechanisms to ensure that research and innovation activities contribute meaningfully to institutional goals, national priorities, and global development agendas.

5. DEFINITIONS

Research – A systematic and rigorous process of generating new knowledge or solving problems, conducted under the auspices of the University of Limpopo.

Innovation – The process at the University of Limpopo of converting research findings and ideas into practical solutions, products, services, or processes that create value for society and the economy.

Research and Innovation (R&I) – An integrated approach at the University of Limpopo that combines knowledge creation (research) with its application (innovation) to achieve measurable impact.

NICHE Areas – Strategic research priority areas identified and approved by the University of Limpopo to focus resources, build excellence, and enhance institutional impact.

Research Excellence – The production of high-quality, credible, and impactful research outputs at the University of Limpopo that meet national and international standards.

Research Capacity Development – Planned activities at the University of Limpopo aimed at developing the skills, competencies, and career progression of researchers, including staff and postgraduate students.

Postgraduate Student – A student registered at the University of Limpopo for an honours, master's, or doctoral qualification that includes a research component.

Research Supervision – The academic guidance and mentorship provided by qualified staff at the University of Limpopo to support postgraduate students in completing their research degrees.

Research Ethics – The principles and standards that guide the responsible conduct of research at the University of Limpopo, ensuring respect for human participants, animals, and the environment.

Ethical Clearance – Formal approval granted by the University of Limpopo's recognised ethics committees namely the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) and the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) confirming that a research project complies with required ethical standards before commencement.

Academic Integrity – The commitment by staff and students at the University of Limpopo to honesty, transparency, and accountability in conducting and reporting research.

Responsible Conduct of Research – Adherence by all researchers at the University of Limpopo to ethical principles, professional standards, and regulatory requirements throughout the research process.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Digital technologies used at the University of Limpopo to perform tasks such as data analysis, prediction, and decision support in research and innovation, in an ethical and responsible manner.

Digital Transformation – The integration of digital technologies into research, teaching, and administration at the University of Limpopo to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and impact.

Intellectual Property (IP) – Innovations and creations arising from research conducted at the University of Limpopo, such as inventions, software, and publications, which can be legally protected.

Technology Transfer – The process through which the University of Limpopo shares research outputs and innovations with industry, government, or communities for practical use.

Commercialisation – The process of developing and bringing innovations and intellectual property from the University of Limpopo to market or practical application for economic or social benefit.

Research Outputs – The measurable products of research conducted at the University of Limpopo, including publications, patents, reports, and other scholarly or creative works.

Research Infrastructure – Facilities, equipment, digital systems, and support services provided by the University of Limpopo to enable research and innovation activities.

International Collaboration – Research and innovation partnerships between the University of Limpopo and institutions in other countries to promote knowledge exchange and global impact.

Integrated Research and Postgraduate Management System (IRPGMS) – A digital system used by the University of Limpopo to manage postgraduate processes, research administration, monitoring, and reporting.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) – The systematic process at the University of Limpopo of tracking progress, assessing performance, and measuring the outcomes and impact of research and innovation activities.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Measurable indicators used by the University of Limpopo to assess progress and success in achieving research and innovation goals.

Third-Stream Income – Revenue generated by the University of Limpopo from research grants, partnerships, innovation activities, and commercialisation, excluding tuition fees and government subsidies.

Research Culture – The environment and shared values at the University of Limpopo that encourage and support active participation in research and innovation.

6. PRINCIPLES

This Policy is guided by the following principles:

6.1. Research Excellence

Research and innovation activities shall uphold high standards of quality, rigour, relevance, and impact.

6.2. Ethical Conduct and Integrity

All research and innovation activities shall comply with applicable ethical, legal, and regulatory requirements.

6.3. African-Centred and Globally Engaged Scholarship

Research and innovation shall contribute to African development while advancing international scholarship and collaboration.

6.4. Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The University shall promote innovation, technology transfer, intellectual property protection, and commercialisation.

6.5. Digital Transformation

Research and innovation shall leverage digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence responsibly and ethically.

6.6. Transformation and Inclusion

Research and innovation shall contribute to equity, diversity, inclusion, and human capacity development.

6.7. Societal Impact

Research and innovation shall address societal challenges and contribute to sustainable development.

7. POLICY PROCEDURE

7.1 Research Excellence and Strategic Alignment

7.1.1 NICHE Areas and Research Priorities

- a) Research shall be aligned with approved institutional NICHE areas.
- b) Research priorities shall support national, continental, and global development agendas.
- c) NICHE areas shall be reviewed periodically to ensure relevance and impact.

7.1.2 Research Centres, Institutes and Research Chairs

- a) Research centres, institutes, and Research Chairs shall serve as strategic platforms for advancing research excellence.
- b) Dedicated support mechanisms shall be established to strengthen research performance and impact.

7.2 Research Capacity Development

- a) The University shall increase the number and progression of NRF-rated researchers.
- b) The University shall expand the number of Research Chairs.
- c) The University shall increase postdoctoral research fellowships.
- d) Structured mentorship and leadership development programmes shall be implemented.
- e) Research capacity development programmes shall include grantsmanship, supervision development, research leadership, Artificial Intelligence literacy, and academic writing support.
- f) The University shall support participation in national and international rankings.

7.3 Postgraduate Research and Training

- a) Postgraduate education shall remain central to the University's research mission.
- b) The University shall increase postgraduate enrolment, throughput, and graduation rates.

- c) Research supervision quality shall be strengthened through continuous professional development.
- d) The Integrated Research and Postgraduate Management System (IRPGMS) shall be utilised for postgraduate administration and monitoring.
- e) Digital technologies and AI-enabled systems shall be used to enhance student support and success.

7.4 Research Ethics, Integrity and Responsible Conduct

- a) All research shall comply with approved ethics policies and procedures.
- b) Ethical clearance shall be obtained before the commencement of research involving humans, animals, or environmental interventions.
- c) The University shall promote academic integrity and responsible conduct of research.
- d) Artificial Intelligence shall be used ethically and responsibly in research and innovation activities.

7.5 Innovation, Intellectual Property and Commercialisation

- a) The University shall promote innovation and entrepreneurship.
- b) Intellectual Property shall be governed by the approved Intellectual Property Policy.
- c) The Technology Transfer Office shall coordinate intellectual property protection and commercialisation activities.
- d) Innovation funding mechanisms shall support proof-of-concept and early-stage innovation development.
- e) Innovation projects shall be monitored and evaluated using approved institutional systems.

7.6 Internationalisation and Strategic Partnerships

- a) Strategic partnerships shall align with institutional research priorities and NICHE areas.
- b) The University shall promote collaborative research, co-supervision, staff mobility, and joint academic programmes.
- c) International partnerships shall contribute to research impact, visibility, and competitiveness.

7.7 Digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence and Research Infrastructure

- a) Research and innovation shall be supported through appropriate digital infrastructure.
- b) Artificial Intelligence shall be deployed responsibly to enhance research management and performance.
- c) Research data and digital systems shall be protected through approved cybersecurity and data governance frameworks.
- d) Staff and postgraduate students shall receive training in cybersecurity and data protection.

7.8 Funding, Resource Allocation and Sustainability

- a) Funding shall be strategically aligned to institutional priorities.
- b) Research excellence, capacity development, and innovation shall receive targeted investment.
- c) External funding opportunities and third-stream income generation shall be actively pursued.
- d) Sustainable funding mechanisms shall be established to support long-term research and innovation growth.

7.9 Governance, Monitoring and Compliance

- a) Research and innovation activities shall be governed through approved institutional structures.
- b) Performance shall be monitored through approved Key Performance Indicators.
- c) Quarterly and annual reports shall be submitted to relevant governance structures.
- d) Digital monitoring systems and dashboards shall support evidence-based decision-making.
- e) Non-compliance may result in corrective actions in accordance with University policies.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Person	Responsibilities
Postgraduate Students	Comply with research, ethics, and innovation requirements
Academic Staff and Researchers	Conduct research in accordance with policy requirements
Research Centre Directors and Research Chair Holders	Lead implementation of research and innovation programmes
Directors: Research Administration, Innovation, ICT and International Affairs Office	Support implementation within their areas of responsibility
Executive Deans	Ensure faculty-level implementation and performance
DVC: Research, Innovation and Partnerships	Provide institutional leadership, oversight, and implementation
Senate	Provide academic oversight of research and innovation activities.
Council	Provide overall governance and approve research and innovation policy direction

9. GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are provided to support the interpretation and implementation of this Policy:

- a) Research and innovation activities should be aligned with the University of Limpopo Strategic Plan, Research and Innovation Strategy, approved NICHE Areas, and relevant national, continental, and global development priorities.
- b) Faculties, Schools, Research Centres, Institutes, and Research Chairs should promote a culture of research excellence, innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.
- c) Staff and postgraduate students should be encouraged to participate in research capacity development initiatives, including mentorship programmes, grantsmanship training, research leadership development, academic writing support, digital literacy, and Artificial Intelligence literacy programmes.
- d) Researchers should actively pursue interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, national, and international collaborations that enhance research quality, visibility, competitiveness, and impact.
- e) Research outputs, innovation activities, and postgraduate supervision should be managed in accordance with approved University policies, ethical standards, funding requirements, and applicable legislation.
- f) The University should support the responsible and ethical use of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence in research and innovation activities.
- g) Research and innovation activities should contribute to societal impact, sustainable development, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and the University's vision of finding solutions for Africa.

10. POLICY REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be reviewed every three years or earlier if required.

11. POLICY DEVIATION

Any deviation from this Policy shall require prior approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships. All approved deviations shall be documented and reported through appropriate governance structures.

12. POLICY RESCISSION

This Policy supersedes all previous Research Policies and Research and Innovation Policies inconsistent with its provisions. Rescission shall be approved by Council upon recommendation of the appropriate governance structures.

13. POLICY MANAGEMENT

The Secretariat and Records Manager, under the supervision of the Policy Owner, shall be responsible for the overall maintenance, administration, publication, storage, and version control of this Policy and all related documentation.

The official approved version of this Policy shall be maintained in the University's central policy repository and records management requirements. The Policy Owner shall ensure that the Policy remains current, relevant, and aligned with institutional strategies, legislative requirements, and national and international research and innovation frameworks.

4. POLICY EXCLUSIONS

This Policy does not apply to:

- a) Activities undertaken entirely outside the auspices of the University.
- b) Research activities governed exclusively by external agreements approved by the University.
- c) Personal scholarly activities that do not utilise University resources and are not undertaken within the scope of University responsibilities.

15. EFFECTS OF POLICY NON-COMPLIANCE

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in withdrawal of institutional research support, suspension of research activities, disciplinary action in accordance with University policies and other corrective actions deemed appropriate by the University.

16. POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE

This Policy becomes effective upon approval by the appropriate governance structures of the University of Limpopo.

17. REFERENCES AND RELATED MATERIALS

University of Limpopo Strategic Plan 2026–2030.

University of Limpopo Research and Innovation Strategy 2026–2030.

Digital Transformation Strategy.

Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.

National Development Plan 2030.

Department of Higher Education and Training Frameworks.

Department of Science, Technology and Innovation Policies.

NRF Frameworks and Guidelines.

Agenda 2063.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

18. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by

