



RESEARCH CHAIRS POLICY

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ACRONYMS

C: Council

EMC: Executive Management Committee

ECS: Executive Committee of Senate

S: Senate

SREC: Senate Research and Ethics Committee

UL: University of Limpopo

1. INTRODUCTION

Research chairs are acknowledged by the University of Limpopo (UL) as strategic resources for promoting postgraduate education and training, innovation, research excellence, internationalisation, and societal impact. The University's goal of becoming an African-centred, internationally engaged, research-intensive institution is, amongst others, given effect to by Research Chairs.

The University Strategic Plan, the University Research and Innovation Strategy, National Research Foundation (NRF) programmes, national development priorities, and other research funding instruments are all prioritising research chairs as enablers of building institutional research culture and performance.

The establishment and management of Research Chairs (whether state-funded or privately funded or University-funded) at the University of Limpopo must therefore be guided by clear set of governance principles, accountability mechanisms, sustainability considerations, succession planning, and performance management processes.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) Provide clear institutional direction regarding the establishment, (re) appointment, management, retention, governance, operation, and succession planning of Research Chairs hosted by the University.
- b) Promote and protect the research culture and performance of Research Chair appointments.
- c) Maximise research productivity, postgraduate training, internationalisation, innovation, and societal impact.
- d) Clarify institutional roles, responsibilities, reporting lines, and accountability structures relating to Research Chairs.
- e) Ensure long-term sustainability of the Research Chairs through structured mentorship and succession planning.
- f) Strengthen the University's research capacity and contribution to national and international research priorities.
- g) Advance, through the Research Chairs, the University 's strategic aspiration of "Finding Solutions for Africa."
- h) Ensure compliance with applicable legislative requirements, institutional policies, and the governance requirements of external research funders governing Research Chairs.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- a) All Research Chairs hosted by the University of Limpopo, including nationally funded, industry-funded, privately endowed, donor-funded, and institutionally funded Chairs.
- b) Faculties, Schools, Institutes, Centres of Excellence, Research Units, and Research Platforms hosting Research Chairs.
- c) Executive Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, Research Directors, and all institutional offices responsible for research management, support and governance.
- d) Research Chair Holders, Postdoctoral Research Fellows, postgraduate students, and research personnel attached to Research Chair programmes.
- e) Where a Research Chair is established through an external funding agency, the provisions of this Policy shall apply together with the requirements of the applicable funding agreement. In the event of any conflict, the legally binding funding conditions shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Limpopo recognises Research Chairs as strategic research assets that contribute to research performance, capacity development, innovation, and societal impact.

The University shall establish, support, monitor, and evaluate Research Chairs through transparent governance processes to ensure that they:

- a) Advance institutional research priorities;
- b) Produce high-impact research outputs;
- c) Strengthen postgraduate education and supervision;
- d) Develop and support emerging researchers;
- e) Secure external funding to advance the research priorities of the University;
- f) Contribute to innovation, partnerships, and knowledge transfer; and
- g) Enhance the national and international reputation of the University.
- h) Ensure that all Research Chairs are managed in accordance with applicable legislation, institutional governance requirements, and the conditions of approved external funding agreements.

5. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

- 5.1 *Research Chair* – A senior academic position at the University of Limpopo established to lead a focused, high-impact research programme, advance knowledge production, and strengthen postgraduate training and research capacity.
- 5.2 *Research Chair Holder* – An academic appointed by the University of Limpopo in collaboration with any Research Institution to occupy a Research Chair and

who is responsible for research leadership, postgraduate supervision, mentorship, and securing research funding.

- 5.3 *Research Programme* – A coordinated set of research activities led by a Research Chair at the University of Limpopo, aligned with institutional NICHE areas and designed to produce high-quality and impactful outputs.
- 5.4 *NICHE Areas* – Strategic research priority areas identified and approved by the University of Limpopo to focus resources, drive excellence, and address institutional, national, and societal needs.
- 5.5 *Research Excellence* – The achievement of high-quality, credible, and impactful research outputs at the University of Limpopo that meet recognised national and international standards.
- 5.6 *Postgraduate Supervision* – The academic guidance and mentorship provided at the University of Limpopo to postgraduate students to ensure successful completion of their research qualifications.
- 5.7 *Postdoctoral Research Fellow* – Researcher at the University of Limpopo who has completed a doctoral degree and is engaged in advanced research and scholarly development under the mentorship of a Research Chair or senior academic.
- 5.8 *Mentorship* – A structured process at the University of Limpopo through which experienced researchers support the development, skills transfer, and career progression of emerging researchers and postgraduate students.
- 5.9 *Succession Planning* – A formal and defined process at the University of Limpopo of identifying and, supporting, developing and preparing future and emerging research leaders with a view to ensuring continuity and sustainability of Research Chairs.
- 5.10 *Research Productivity* – The measurable outputs of research conducted at the University of Limpopo, including publications, postgraduate graduations, research funding secured, and innovation outputs.
- 5.11 *Workload Allocation* – The structured distribution of academic responsibilities at the University of Limpopo to ensure that Research Chairs prioritise research, postgraduate supervision, and mentorship.
- 5.12 *Research Governance* – The systems, structures, and processes at the University of Limpopo aimed at ensuring effective oversight, accountability, and management of Research Chairs and their activities.
- 5.13 *Grant Holder* – The individual or institutional representative recognised by the funding agency as responsible for the scientific, financial and administrative management of a research grant.

- 5.14 *Conditions of Grant* – The contractual terms and obligations issued by a funding agency governing the management, reporting and use of research grant funding.
- 5.15 *Institutional Designated Authority (IDA)* – The institutional office or official authorised to submit, endorse or manage research grants and official reports on behalf of the University.
- 5.16 *Grant Management* – The institutional oversight of research grants to ensure compliance with funding conditions, financial accountability and reporting obligations.
- 5.17 *Annual Progress Report* – An institutional or funder-required report providing evidence of research progress, outputs, expenditure and achievement of agreed objectives.
- 5.18 *Eligible Expenditure* – Expenditure permitted under the applicable funding agreement.
- 5.19 *Ineligible Expenditure* – Expenditure prohibited by the applicable funding agreement.
- 5.20 *Performance Monitoring* – The ongoing assessment at the University of Limpopo of a Research Chair's outputs and impact using defined indicators such as research publications, postgraduate throughput, and funding secured.
- 5.21 *Research Ethics* – The principles and standards guiding the responsible conduct of research at the University of Limpopo, ensuring protection of human participants, animals, and the environment.
- 5.22 *Ethical Clearance* – Formal approval required before commencing research at the University of Limpopo, granted by recognised ethics committees, including the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) and the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC), confirming that the research complies with ethical standards.
- 5.23 *Innovation* – The process at the University of Limpopo of translating research findings into practical applications, products, or services that create societal and economic value.
- 5.24 *External Funding* – Financial resources obtained from sources outside the University of Limpopo, such as government, industry, or international partners, to support research and innovation activities.
- 5.25 *Research Impact* – The contribution of research conducted at the University of Limpopo to society, policy development, the economy, or academic advancement.

- 5.26 *Centre of Excellence* – A specialised research entity at or affiliated with the University of Limpopo that brings together expertise and resources to address strategic research priorities at a high level of excellence.
- 5.27 *Institutional Hosting* -The formal placement and support of a Research Chair within a Faculty, Centre, or Institute at the University of Limpopo, including provision of infrastructure, governance, and administrative support.

6. PRINCIPLES

This Policy is guided by the following principles:

6.1. Research Excellence

Research Chairs shall promote internationally recognised research excellence and scholarly leadership.

6.2. Accountability

Research Chairs shall be subject to transparent governance, reporting, monitoring, and performance review processes.

6.3. Sustainability

Research Chairs shall contribute to long-term institutional research capacity through mentorship and succession planning.

6.4. Research Integrity

Research Chairs shall conduct research in accordance with approved ethical standards and institutional policies.

6.5. Transformation

Research Chairs shall contribute to transformation, inclusion, equity, and development of emerging researchers.

6.6. Impact

Research Chairs shall contribute to societal, economic, policy, and scholarly impact.

6.7. Collaboration

Research Chairs shall foster national and international partnerships and multidisciplinary research collaboration.

6.8. Financial Accountability

Research Chairs shall ensure responsible stewardship of research funding in accordance with applicable funding agreements.

6.9. Research Data Governance

Research Chairs shall promote responsible research data management, protection of confidential information, and compliance with applicable legislation and policies governing research data.

6.10. Open Science

Research Chairs should promote responsible knowledge dissemination, open science practices, and research accessibility where permitted by legislation, contractual obligations and intellectual property requirements.

6.11. Compliance

Research Chairs shall comply with applicable legislative requirements, policies and funding conditions throughout the duration of the Research Chair.

7. POLICY PROCEDURE

7.1 Research chair management and operational framework

7.1.1 Proposal Requirements

- a) Research Chair proposals shall demonstrate alignment with institutional, national, continental, and global priorities.
- b) Proposals shall indicate funding sources, sustainability plans, transformation objectives, governance arrangements, and risk mitigation measures.
- c) Proposals shall include a five-year research and postgraduate development plan.
- d) Where resources permit, the University may co-fund privately funded Research Chairs.
- e) Research Chair proposals shall identify applicable funding obligations and demonstrate capacity to comply with those obligations.

7.1.2 Appointment of a Research Chair

- a) A Chair Holder shall hold or be eligible for a permanent academic appointment.
- b) The appointee shall demonstrate sustained research excellence.
- c) The appointee shall demonstrate strong postgraduate supervision and mentorship experience.
- d) The appointee shall demonstrate leadership in research and innovation.

7.1.3 Renewal of a Research Chair

- a) Research Chairs shall ordinarily operate on a five-year cycle unless otherwise prescribed by the funder.
- b) Renewal shall be based on satisfactory performance and continuation of funding.

7.2 Core Mandate of a Research Chair

A Research Chair shall:

- a) Lead a high-impact research programme.
- b) Produce high-quality scholarly outputs.
- c) Supervise postgraduate students.
- d) Mentor postdoctoral fellows and emerging researchers.
- e) Build sustainable research teams.
- f) Secure external funding.
- g) Promote innovation and knowledge transfer.
- h) Strengthen national and international collaborations.
- i) Ensure compliance with governance requirements and applicable funding conditions.

7.3 Time Allocation and Workload Requirements

- a) Research Chairs shall dedicate at least 80% of their workload to research-related activities.
- b) The remaining 20% may be allocated to teaching and/or strategic institutional service.
- c) Administrative responsibilities shall not compromise research productivity.

7.4. Institutional Roles and Leadership Considerations

- a) In principle, Research Chairs should prioritise their research-intensive mandate and avoid roles that impose substantial administrative and operational responsibilities.
- b) The University recognises that Research Chairs may contribute to the development and growth of research entities, including Centres of Excellence, as part of institutional strengthening.
- c) However, it is generally not preferable for a Research Chair to simultaneously assume full directorship responsibilities of a Centre of Excellence, particularly where such responsibilities may detract from research productivity and postgraduate supervision.
- d) This principle applies both prior to and post-retirement, subject to institutional needs and governance considerations.
- e) Any exceptions shall be considered on a case-by-case basis, considering workload balance, institutional priorities, and funder requirements.
- f) Where appropriate and where a need arises, Research Chairs may engage with and report to the Director of School on matters relating to postgraduate students, without compromising their primary reporting lines.

7.5 Succession Planning, Mentorship and Continuity

- a) The University shall implement structured succession planning and mentorship mechanisms for all Research Chairs to ensure sustainability, continuity, and long-term institutional research capacity.

- b) Each Research Chair shall develop and implement a formal mentorship and succession plan aimed at identifying, nurturing, and preparing emerging researchers for future research leadership roles.
- c) Succession planning shall include the development of postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, early-career researchers, and other suitably qualified academics within the relevant research field.
- d) Mentorship activities shall promote skills transfer, research capacity development, leadership growth, and the advancement of research excellence within the University.
- e) The University may retain high-performing Research Chairs before or beyond the normal retirement age, subject to the relevant Human Resources policies, funding availability, and applicable legislative and contractual requirements.
- f) Research Chairs shall ensure that knowledge, expertise, networks, and research programmes are transferred appropriately to support continuity and minimise institutional risk.
- g) Progress on mentorship, succession planning, and continuity measures shall be monitored and reported through approved institutional performance management and governance processes.
- h) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships shall oversee the implementation and effectiveness of succession planning and mentorship arrangements for Research Chairs across the University.

7.6 Governance, Monitoring and Compliance

- a) Research Chairs shall be hosted within approved Faculties, Centres, Institutes, or Research Platforms.
- b) Research Chairs shall report according to the existing University governance structures and approved procedures.
- c) Annual performance reviews shall be conducted.
- d) Performance indicators shall include:
 - i. Research outputs;
 - ii. Postgraduate throughput;
 - iii. Research funding secured;
 - iv. Innovation outputs;
 - v. Partnerships established;
 - vi. Societal impact.
- e) Reports shall be submitted through approved institutional governance structures.
- f) Non-compliance may result in institutional intervention, review, or termination of hosting arrangements.
- g) Research Chairs funded through external agencies shall comply with the reporting, governance and accountability requirements prescribed by the relevant funding agency.
- h) The University recognises that Research Chairs may be established through different funding models, including institutionally funded, government-funded, donor-funded, industry-funded, endowed and internationally funded Research

Chairs. While all Research Chairs shall be governed by this Policy, additional obligations imposed by the relevant funding agreement shall apply where applicable.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 81 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research at the University of Limpopo will take direct accountability for the Research Chair and its performance. The above notwithstanding, Chair will fit into the normal management structures of the University, which includes the Executive Dean of the Faculty, Director of School and Head of Department
- 82 While embedded in academic department and School, a Research Chairholder is required to in consultation with their respective Faculty Executive Dean and Director of School

Official	Responsibilities
Research Chair Holder	a) Provide research leadership, supervise postgraduate students with the Faculty or across Faculties, mentor researchers, secure funding, produce outputs, and comply with reporting requirements (refer also to Paragraph 9 below for more details)
Executive Dean	a) Mobilise institutional and Faculty support for the hosting of the Research Chair located within the Faculty, in accordance with approved University policies and procedures. b) Implement the teaching to research time ratio – The Executive Dean shall, in consultation with the Director and Head of Department, ensure that Chair-holder may not spend more than 20% of their time on teaching and/or management responsibilities not related to activities of the Research Chair. c) Ensure that the Chairholder has a clear plan for mentorship, research training, and support for postgraduate students in the Department/School/Faculty, contributing to their academic and research growth. d) Ensure that the sustainability plan for the Chair outlines strategies for securing long-term funding, resources, and support, and demonstrates the faculty's commitment to sustaining the Chair's operations beyond its initial establishment.
Director of School/Head of Department	a) Provide School's or Department's support to the Research Chair with regard to such matters as research support as deemed appropriate by the School/Department. b) Create conditions for the Research Chair to actively engage in the development and supervision of postgraduate students, including master's and doctoral candidates.

	c) Implement the teaching to research time ratio for the Research Chairs, in consultation with the Executive Dean.
Director/Head of Research Centre or Institute	a) Provide operational support and facilitate implementation of research programmes.
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Partnerships	a) Provide strategic oversight and institutional coordination of Research Chairs and address any strategic obstacles that could hinder the performance of the Research Chairholder. b) Directly accountable for the chair's performance, deliverables, and annual progress reporting to the funding agency or the University Senate in case of University-funded Chairs.
Senate Research and Ethics Committee	c) Through consolidated reports from the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, monitor research performance and provide governance oversight. d) Prepare Consolidated Annual Performance Reports for submission of the same to Senate, through relevant Committees. The report should address: (i) milestones and expected outputs as presented in the incumbent's original grant proposal, (ii) postgraduate student and postdoctoral fellow support, (iii) research outputs, (iv) support from host institution and the NRF, (v) funds leveraged from other sources and (vi) challenges and constraints on performance and progress
Senate	a) As part of its oversight responsibilities, consider reports and recommendations relating to Research Chairs from the Senate Committee or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
Council	a) Provide governance oversight and support to the Research Chairs to Approve establishment and continuation of institutional Research Chairs where required.

9. GUIDELINES

The following guidelines shall support the implementation and interpretation of this Policy:

- a) Research Chairs should align their research programmes with the University of Limpopo Strategic Plan, Research and Innovation Strategy, approved NICHE Areas, and relevant national, continental, and global research priorities.
- b) Research Chairs are encouraged to establish multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research collaborations to enhance research excellence and impact.
- c) Research Chairs should actively contribute to postgraduate student recruitment, supervision, mentorship, graduation, and career development.

- d) Research Chairs should promote research visibility through publications, conference presentations, community engagement, innovation activities, policy influence, and international partnerships.
- e) Research Chairs should develop sustainability plans to support continuity of research programmes beyond the duration of external funding.
- f) Faculties, Institutes, Centres, and Research Platforms hosting Research Chairs should provide an enabling environment, including appropriate infrastructure, administrative support, and research development opportunities.
- g) Research Chairs should comply with all applicable University policies, funder requirements, ethical standards, financial regulations, and reporting obligations.
- h) Research Chairs should support transformation, equity, diversity, and inclusion in research capacity development and postgraduate training.
- i) Research Chairs should comply with institutional research data governance, intellectual property and open science requirements.
- j) Research Chairs funded through external agencies should comply with applicable funding conditions throughout the duration of the grant.

10. POLICY REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be reviewed every three years.

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.

No deviation may be approved where such deviation would result in non-compliance with applicable legislation or legally binding funding agreements.

12. POLICY RESCISSION

This Policy supersedes any previous University policies, guidelines, or practices relating to Research Chairs that are inconsistent with its provisions. Rescission of this Policy shall be approved by Council upon recommendation from the relevant 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.

14. POLICY EXCLUSIONS

This Policy does not apply to:

- a) Ordinary academic staff positions not designated as Research Chairs.
- b) Temporary research leadership appointments not formally approved as Research Chairs.
- c) Visiting scholars who are not formally appointed as Research Chair Holders.
- d) Research projects not formally linked to an approved Research Chair Programme.

15. EFFECTS OF POLICY NON-COMPLIANCE

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in performance management interventions, review of hosting arrangements, suspension of institutional support, non-renewal of a Research Chair appointment and other actions deemed necessary by the University in accordance with policies and applicable institutional rules.

16. POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE

This Policy becomes effective on a date determined by the Council.

17. REFERENCES AND RELATED MATERIALS

University of Limpopo Strategic Plan, as amended.

University of Limpopo Research and Innovation Strategy, as amended.

National Research Foundation Research Chairs Framework.

Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.

NRF Institutional Grants: Conditions of Grant (current applicable edition).

DSI-NRF South African Research Chairs Initiative Framework.

NRF Grant Management Guide (where applicable).

Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act, 2008 (Act No. 51 of 2008).

Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act No. 4 of 2013).

University Research Integrity Policy.

University Intellectual Property Policy.

University Research Data Management Policy.

University of Limpopo Research Ethics Policy.

Other applicable national and international research governance frameworks.

18. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by