THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY (ORI), UCT
TERMS OF REFERENCE
November 2024

Status

The ORI is a directorate situated within the central Research Office at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The Director of the ORI reports directly to the Executive Director: Research.

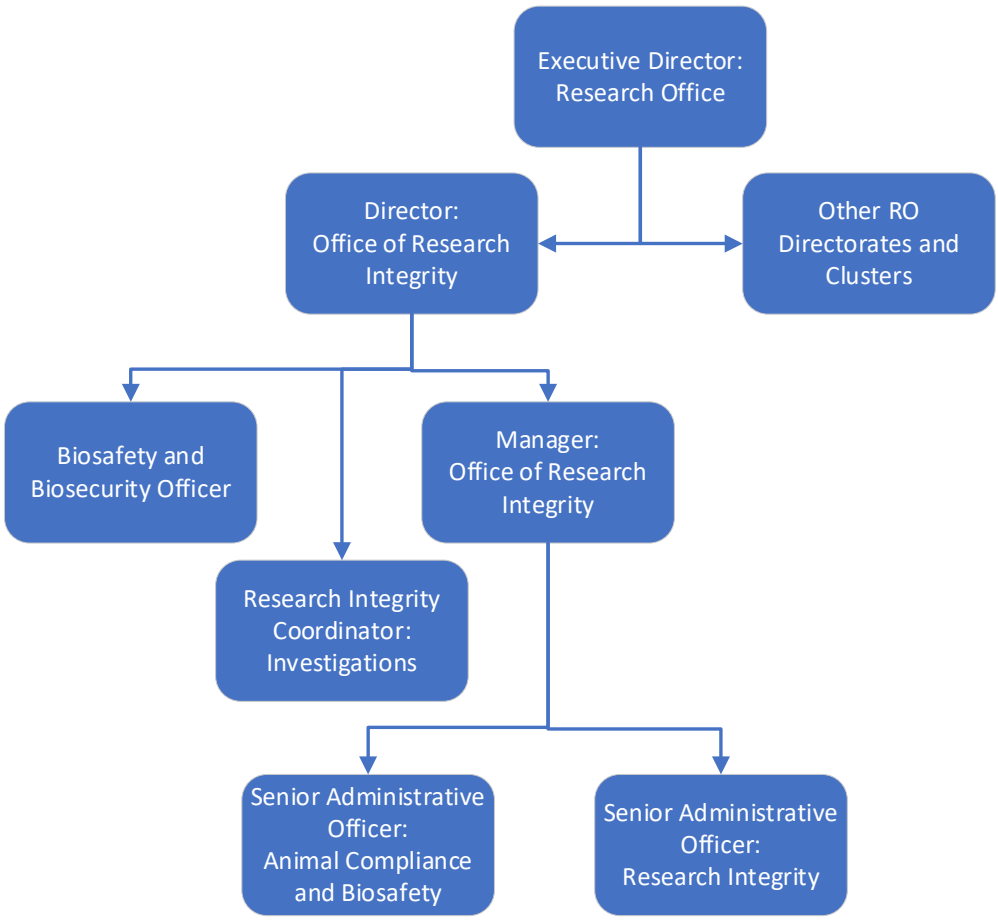
Purpose

The purpose of the ORI is to sustain, enhance and promote the responsible conduct of research (RCR)[1] at UCT. In addition, the purpose is to promote research ethics and compliance in accordance with the highest applicable national and international ethical and legal standards.

Staff

The ORI comprises the following posts, which may change as institutional demands evolve:

- Director
- Research Integrity Manager
- Biosafety and Biosecurity Specialist
- Research Integrity Coordinator: Investigations
- Senior Administrative Officer: Animal Compliance and Biosafety
- Senior Administrative Officer: Research Integrity



[1] Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is defined as: the use of honest and verifiable methods in proposing, performing and analysing research; reporting research results with particular attention to adherence to domain specific norms and standards; translating output to meaningful changes and, rules regulations and professional codes. RCR should be viewed as day-to-day habits and practices of researchers, with a focus on conducting, honest, accountable, verifiable, transparent, and high-quality research.

Terms of Reference

1. To provide administrative and logistical support as well as relevant information and advice to both Senate level ethics committees (Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC), Senate Animal Ethics Committee (SAEC) and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)) regarding applicable national and international ethical and legal norms and standards for research;
2. To provide committee servicing and support to the Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC)
3. To provide support, information, and advice to the above committees regarding the implementation of UCT policy and processes relating to the responsible conduct of research. (Of note, the Senate Ethics committees and ORI remain separate entities whose mandate and decision-making capabilities are also wholly separate);
4. To build and sustain relationships with Faculty-level Research Ethics Committees (RECs), Animal Ethics Committees (AECs) and Faculty Biosafety Committees (FBCs) to ensure that ethics review processes work smoothly; to advise RECs, AECs and FBCs, as appropriate, to ensure maintenance of the highest ethical standards in research conducted at and under the auspices of the University;
5. To provide administrative, logistical and servicing support to the committees (Preliminary Informal Enquiry – PIE – and Special Investigations Committee – SIC) constituted under the UCT Policy and Procedures for Breach of Research Ethics Codes and Allegations of Misconduct in Research (Council approved revision December 2023). This also includes the development and maintenance of a secure data-base to record and track all complaints and investigations. The ORI does not act in a decision-making capacity on either of these committees. The ORI's role is to ensure that the committees function in line with the policy and to provide administrative and logistical support. The decision-making duties sit with the PIE and SIC committees.
6. To provide information and assistance where appropriate to all members of the UCT research community regarding matters relating to the responsible conduct of research;
7. To ensure that university research ethics and integrity-related policy documents and ethics guidelines are up to date and compliant with applicable national and international ethical and legal frameworks, as well as accessible to users;
8. To support and actively engage with the implementation of new institutional policy, where relevant to the ORI's mandate;
9. To stay abreast of new developments in international and national research ethics and integrity frameworks, including legal frameworks, policies, and practices and to bring these to the attention of the UCT research community, including the EiRC, the SAEC, the IBC, the IFHREC and the University Research Committee (URC), as appropriate. appropriate mechanisms will be used to accomplish this including attendance by ORI staff, where appropriate, at relevant workshops, conferences, and other learning opportunities;
10. To develop and deliver appropriate Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training activities to the UCT research community across a variety of platforms including face-to-face workshops, written communication, and online training initiatives. RCR training activities will also include topics related to biosafety and biosecurity.
11. To upskill and empower faculty-based research integrity champions, who will act as disciplinary-/faculty-specific advocates for RCR and can also provide space for the interface of RCR knowledge and disciplinary knowledge and act as first-line advisors.
12. To administer, support **and require** research-related compliance processes, (including initial application processes and mandatory post-approval reporting and monitoring processes) that are relevant to the ORI mandate of promoting responsible research conduct and ensuring compliance with applicable national and international regulatory standards. Such compliance processes include, but are not limited to at a national level, South African Veterinarian Council (SAVC) authorization and annual payments and reporting processes for all researchers conducting research procedures on animals where applicable, and Department of Agriculture (DoA) permit procedures (research involving Genetically Modified Organisms, research falling under the jurisdiction of Section 20 of the Animal Diseases Act of 1987, import and export permits etc.). The ORI is also active in supporting compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act in a research context. Internationally the ORI is responsible for ensuring that US government funder-related requirements for federal-wide assurances (FWAs) involving the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the Office for Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW), the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the Office for Science Policy (OSP) and the Office for Biotechnology (OBT) are up to date and in place. The Director: ORI is responsible for signing off as 'institutional official' for all the above-mentioned compliance-related activities;

13. To provide end-user knowledge and advice regarding ethics and compliance research information management system development (e.g. to the eRA/Converis team).
14. To work with the eRA ethics implementation team to bring faculty research ethics and compliance processes on to the eRA platform and uphold a risk-based approach to faculty use and configuration of the system;
15. To develop and support appropriate quality assurance, monitoring and oversight processes particularly related to animal research, as required by both internal (institutional) and external (e.g., SAVC, DoA) policy and regulation. This includes:
    a. providing support to the Senate AEC inspecting veterinarian, who is independently contracted by the Research Office. The ORI is responsible for providing appropriate and timeous feedback to relevant persons/entities on the outcome of these activities.
16. To work with Properties and Services (P&S) stakeholders to ensure that potential gaps in compliance and health & safety procedures, managed by different offices, are minimized, mitigated, and addressed.
17. To develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive, university-wide biosafety and biosecurity programme, designed to proactively ensure the minimization of risk related to non-compliance with regulations and policies governing the conduct of research with potentially hazardous biological agents (pHBAs).
18. To provide technical guidance to Faculty staff; assisting researchers with relevant biosafety and biosecurity documentation for permit and/or grant applications and ensure timely renewal of appropriate permits and approval documents.
19. To develop and maintain a database of records relating to all biosafety and biosecurity activities.
20. To assist the Research Contract and Innovation department (RC&I) and the International Grants Hub (IGH) with research grant pre- and post-award matters relating to research ethics, integrity, and institutional due diligence. This includes providing support and information to external auditors, such as funders, when required.