



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Directorate: University Research Support and Policy Development

Communiqué: Volume 3 Number1- May 2024

Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Research Outputs and Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions (2017)

To all DVC's for Research and Senior Directors of Research

The Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department) implements the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions, 2017 (the Policy), which aims to subsidise creative research outputs.

The Department has received positive feedback during the past five years of implementing the policy. Our approach has been consultative and engaging, particularly as we refine implementation. However, there are areas that require further refinement to enhance the quality of submitted creative research outputs, these include:

- **Peer Review Process:** the selection of peer reviewers has been highlighted as a key challenge. This relates to the issue of process, particularly conflict of interest, as this can undermine the integrity of the evaluation process.
- **Limitation of practitioners/ academics within the sector:** the Department acknowledges the limitations within the sector and amongst practitioners. Despite these limitations, addressing conflict of interest in the peer review process is crucial.
- **Selection of Peer Reviewers:** Peer Reviewers should not be selected from the same department or university as the applicant, practitioner, or creator. This is because reviewers with close affiliation to the creator may be influenced by institutional ties, potentially compromising the objectivity of the process.

To ensure a fair process for all, the Department requires the following from universities:

- 1) Institutions are required to utilise the list on Research Outputs Submission System (ROSS) to select a peer reviewer.

- 2) Applicants are not allowed to recommend peer reviewers. The selection must be based on the criteria outlined in the policy, as per paragraph 20 “**Institutions must choose peer reviewers who have appropriate academic qualifications and/or experience to assess submissions by creative practitioners working in a scholarly framework**”; and
- 3) The Department requests that all pending items on ROSS be finalised for peer review in the year 2024. This initiative aims to improve fairness and facilitate the commencement of the double- blind peer review process.

The Department is taking measures to address the persistent challenges in the peer review process, thus maintaining the integrity of the evaluations of the creative research outputs. The outlined requirements for universities reinforce and emphasise transparency and fairness.

Should you have any queries on the matter please contact Dr I Makukule at Makukule.I@dhet.gov.za or Ms J Phenya at Phenya.J@dhet.gov.za

Yours sincerely,



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Date: 22052024