Universum International College
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Policy on Applied Research and Knowledge Exchange

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Universum International College (UNI) recognises applied research as an essential component of a modern higher education institution and as an important mechanism for addressing real-world challenges, strengthening professional practice, supporting innovation, informing decision-making and contributing to the development of society and the economy.

UNI's mission is to support our students to become good citizens, successful and openminded leaders, to thrive in Revolution 4.0, in the digital and globalized era. Applied research and knowledge exchange contribute directly to this mission by connecting academic knowledge with practical challenges, external expertise, community needs, industry priorities and opportunities for innovation.

This Policy establishes a university-wide framework for the development, conduct, management, dissemination and evaluation of applied research and knowledge exchange activities at UNI. It ensures that applied research is conducted responsibly, ethically, inclusively and transparently and that research knowledge is translated into meaningful outcomes for students, professional communities, industry, public institutions, communities and wider society.

The Policy incorporates internationally recognised principles of responsible research collaboration and knowledge exchange, including research integrity, ethical conduct, inclusive participation, openness, contextual sensitivity, due diligence, institutional oversight and demonstrable impact.

The Policy is aligned with UNI's five strategic pillars:

1. Students and Learning at the Centre
2. Quality Improvement
3. Innovation and Entrepreneurship
4. Digital Transformation
5. Internationalization

Through this Policy, UNI seeks to establish a culture in which applied research is connected to practical needs, external expertise, innovation, professional practice and positive societal outcomes.

Article 1:

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the principles, requirements and institutional framework governing applied research and knowledge exchange at UNI.

The Policy aims to promote high-quality applied research; encourage collaboration with external partners; translate research knowledge into practical applications; support two-way knowledge exchange and co-production; protect research integrity and academic independence; ensure responsible management of data and intellectual property; promote inclusive participation; strengthen national and international research networks; develop staff and student research capacity; and monitor research quality and impact.

Article 2:

Scope

This Policy applies specifically to applied research and associated knowledge exchange activities undertaken by or on behalf of UNI.

It applies to academic and professional staff, students participating under supervision, research teams and units, externally funded or sponsored applied research, research with external organisations, consultancy involving generation or application of knowledge, international research collaboration, public and community engagement connected to applied research, commercialisation and innovation arising from applied research, and dissemination and application of research findings.

The Policy applies whether an activity is internally funded, externally funded, jointly funded, unfunded or undertaken under a formal partnership.

Purely theoretical or fundamental research without an applied or knowledge-exchange component falls outside the primary scope of this Policy, while other relevant UNI policies continue to apply.

Article 3:

Definitions

Applied Research means systematic research undertaken primarily to address a practical problem, need, opportunity or challenge and to generate knowledge that can be applied in professional, organisational, technological, economic, social or community contexts.

Knowledge Exchange means a reciprocal process through which UNI and external partners share, apply, adapt and co-create knowledge, evidence, expertise, skills, technologies and experiences for mutual and wider benefit.

Research Collaboration means a structured relationship between UNI researchers and internal or external partners for the development, implementation, dissemination or application of research.

External Partner means an organisation or individual outside UNI participating in or supporting applied research or knowledge exchange.

Research Impact means the demonstrable effect, change or benefit arising from research beyond academic outputs.

Co-Creation means developing research questions, approaches, knowledge or solutions through meaningful participation of researchers and external stakeholders.

Knowledge Transfer means the movement or application of knowledge, technology, expertise or intellectual property from UNI to an external user or partner.

Research Output means any result or product arising from applied research, including publications, reports, datasets, technologies, software, prototypes, policy recommendations and educational or professional resources.

Article 4:

Strategic Alignment

Applied research and knowledge exchange shall contribute to UNI's mission and strategic priorities and, where appropriate, to one or more of its five strategic pillars.

Article 5:

Principles of Applied Research and Knowledge Exchange

UNI shall conduct and support applied research according to the principles of research integrity, academic independence, ethical conduct, mutual benefit, inclusion and meaningful participation, contextual and cultural respect, openness and transparency, evidence-based practice, sustainability and accountability.

Article 6:

Areas of Applied Research

UNI may support applied research in areas aligned with its academic strengths, institutional priorities and external needs, including digital transformation and emerging technologies; business, entrepreneurship and innovation; education and learning; health and wellbeing; design and creative industries; cybersecurity and information technology; digital journalism and communication; law and public policy; social and community development; environmental and sustainability-related challenges; labour-market and professional development; organisational improvement; and interdisciplinary challenges.

Article 7:

Research Collaboration

UNI shall encourage collaborative applied research with appropriate internal and external partners.

Collaboration may include joint projects and studies, commissioned applied research, joint proposals and publications, conferences and workshops, shared resources, joint student supervision, research placements, professional and community-based research, innovation projects, technology development and testing, and other structured research cooperation.

Collaborative research shall have clearly defined objectives, responsibilities, outputs and governance arrangements.

Article 8:

External Research Partners

External partners may include businesses, employers, government and public institutions, municipalities, NGOs and civil-society organisations, professional bodies, educational and healthcare organisations, research institutes and universities, international organisations, community organisations and other organisations with relevant expertise, resources or knowledge.

UNI shall seek partnerships where the partner has a legitimate and relevant role in addressing the research question or applying the resulting knowledge.

Article 9:

Research with Industry and Employers

UNI shall encourage applied research collaboration with industry and employers to strengthen the connection between academic knowledge and professional practice.

Such collaboration may address labour-market needs, technological and organisational challenges, innovation and product development, professional standards, workforce development, digital transformation, entrepreneurship and applied student projects.

Industry collaboration shall not compromise academic standards or research independence.

Article 10:

Research with Government, Public Institutions and Communities

UNI may undertake applied research with government institutions, municipalities, public organisations and communities where research can contribute to improved services, evidence-informed policy, innovation or community development.

Where communities participate, researchers shall seek meaningful engagement and consider community knowledge, priorities and experience.

Article 11:

International Applied Research Collaboration

UNI shall encourage international applied research collaboration that strengthens research capacity, knowledge exchange, innovation and international academic engagement.

Activities may include joint projects, networks, publications, conferences, innovation projects, researcher mobility, joint supervision, international funding applications and shared research resources.

International collaborations shall be subject to appropriate approval, due diligence, ethical requirements and contractual arrangements.

Article 12:

Applied Research Cooperation with Strategic and International Networks

UNI may develop applied research and knowledge-exchange activities with strategic academic and institutional partners and international networks, including Arizona State University (ASU), the Cintana Alliance, the Erasmus+ Programme and its Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), and other relevant academic and professional networks.

UNI's international academic and institutional ecosystem provides opportunities for collaborative applied research, knowledge exchange, international academic cooperation, professional networking, capacity development, innovation, dissemination of research findings, and engagement with higher-education researchers, practitioners, students, managers, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders.

UNI shall seek to use these partnerships and networks responsibly to strengthen its applied research capacity, develop collaborative research opportunities, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise, support international engagement, and increase the practical and societal relevance of its research activities.

Cooperation may include collaborative applied research, knowledge exchange, innovation and entrepreneurship, digital transformation, capacity development, joint research, sharing expertise and resources, professional and academic networking, mobility, and opportunities for students and researchers.

These activities remain subject to applicable agreements, institutional approvals, research ethics and integrity requirements, academic independence, intellectual property and data protection requirements, due diligence, quality assurance, and other applicable UNI policies.

Knowledge exchange may include sharing research findings with external users, professional training, policy and practice engagement, community engagement, industry seminars, public events, consultancy and advisory activities, technology and innovation development, appropriate sharing of research tools or datasets, co-production of outputs and development of professional resources.

Article 14:

Co-Creation and Co-Production

UNI shall encourage appropriate involvement of external stakeholders in relevant stages of applied research.

Partners may contribute, where appropriate, to identifying research problems, developing questions, research design, data collection, interpretation, solution development, testing, dissemination and evaluation.

Co-creation shall be transparent, with appropriate recognition of contributions and arrangements for ownership, authorship and intellectual property.

Article 15:

Research Impact and Societal Benefit

Applied research should seek demonstrable benefits beyond the University, including improved professional practice, public or community services, products and technologies, policy or institutional improvements, entrepreneurship, employment and skills development, educational practice, health and wellbeing, community development, environmental benefits and improved organisational performance.

Researchers should consider pathways to impact when designing projects and maintain evidence showing how findings have been used, adopted or implemented.

Article 16:

Research Funding and External Sponsorship

UNI may accept external funding or sponsorship where arrangements are consistent with its mission and strategic priorities, research integrity, academic independence, ethical requirements, applicable law, financial requirements, research quality and institutional reputation.

External funding shall not give sponsors inappropriate control over methodology, interpretation or publication.

Article 17:

Due Diligence of Research Partners

Before significant applied research collaboration, UNI shall conduct proportionate due diligence.

Due diligence may consider partner identity and legitimacy, financial and organisational capacity, legal compliance, ethics, conflicts of interest, reputational risk, intellectual property, data protection, confidentiality, commercial sensitivities, research-integrity risks and compatibility with UNI values and priorities.

UNI may decline or discontinue a collaboration where significant risks cannot be adequately managed.

Article 18:

Ethics, Integrity and Responsible Research

All applied research shall comply with applicable ethical and research-integrity requirements.

Researchers shall obtain required ethical approval, protect participants, obtain informed consent where required, manage personal information responsibly, accurately represent findings, disclose relevant

conflicts, acknowledge contributions, avoid fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, and maintain appropriate research records.

Knowledge exchange shall also be conducted ethically and responsibly.

Article 19:

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property generated through applied research shall be managed in accordance with UNI policies, agreements and legal requirements.

Research agreements shall, where appropriate, specify ownership of pre-existing and newly created intellectual property, use rights, licensing, commercialisation, authorship, attribution, confidentiality and responsibilities for protection and exploitation.

Article 20:

Research Data and Confidentiality

Research data shall be collected, stored, processed, shared and retained in accordance with legal, ethical and institutional requirements.

Agreements shall establish, where necessary, data ownership and access, storage and security, confidentiality, permitted uses, retention, sharing and responsibilities after project completion.

UNI shall promote responsible data sharing while respecting privacy, confidentiality, commercial sensitivity and ethical restrictions.

Article 21:

Publication and Dissemination

UNI shall support dissemination of applied research through academic, professional, public and community channels, including publications, reports, policy briefs, conferences, seminars, public engagement, digital platforms and appropriate open-access resources.

External partners may review material for factual accuracy or confidentiality, but such review shall not improperly suppress legitimate findings.

Article 22:

Approval of Applied Research Collaborations

Significant external applied research collaborations shall receive appropriate institutional approval before formal commitment by UNI.

Approval shall consider strategic alignment, research quality, ethics, due diligence, finances, legal requirements, intellectual property, data protection, reputational risk, outputs, responsibilities and monitoring arrangements.

No staff member shall enter into a binding research commitment on behalf of UNI without the required authority.

Article 23:

Roles and Responsibilities

Relevant governing and senior management bodies shall provide oversight.

The Quality Assurance function shall support integration of applied research and knowledge exchange into institutional quality processes and continuous improvement.

Research leadership shall coordinate priorities, support researchers and promote external collaboration.

Academic staff shall conduct research responsibly and maintain appropriate records and outputs.

Students shall receive appropriate supervision and comply with research ethics and integrity requirements.

External partners shall comply with agreed research, ethical, legal, confidentiality and intellectual-property requirements.

Article 24:

Capacity Building

UNI shall support staff and student capacity in applied research and knowledge exchange through research-methodology, ethics, data-management, intellectual-property, grant-writing, partnership-development, knowledge-exchange, impact-measurement and research-communication training.

UNI shall encourage mentoring and collaboration between experienced researchers and developing researchers.

Article 25:

Student Participation

UNI shall seek appropriate opportunities for students to participate in applied research and knowledge exchange, including research projects, industry-based research, internships, community projects, innovation projects, applied dissertations or final projects, conferences, knowledge-exchange events and entrepreneurial activities arising from research.

Participation shall provide meaningful educational value and appropriate supervision.

Article 26:

Monitoring and Evaluation

UNI shall monitor the quality, effectiveness and impact of applied research and knowledge exchange.

Indicators may include number and type of projects, external partners, external funding, joint outputs, student participation, knowledge-exchange activities, stakeholder participation, research uptake, innovation outcomes, community and professional impact, international collaboration and partner feedback.

Evaluation shall consider quality, relevance, reach, usefulness and significance, not only quantity.

Article 27:

Evidence of Research Impact

UNI shall encourage researchers and institutional units to maintain evidence of impact, including adoption of findings, changes in professional practice, policy references, products or services, partner testimonials, implementation records, capacity-building outcomes, community outcomes, business outcomes and public engagement evidence.

Such evidence may support institutional reporting, quality assurance, programme development, research evaluation and strategic planning.

Article 28:

Research Collaboration Register

UNI shall maintain an appropriate institutional record of significant applied research collaborations.

The register may include partner, project, research area, responsible unit or researcher, duration, funding, agreement status, outputs, intellectual-property arrangements, ethical approval, monitoring outcomes and renewal or termination information.

Article 29:

Risk Management and Discontinuation

UNI may suspend, decline or discontinue collaboration where significant ethical concerns arise; unacceptable institutional or reputational risk exists; legal requirements are breached; research integrity is compromised; responsibilities are not fulfilled; conflicts cannot be managed; participants face unacceptable harm; the collaboration no longer serves a legitimate purpose; or continuation conflicts with UNI policies or priorities.

Where possible, corrective measures should be considered before termination.

Article 30:

Openness, Accessibility and Responsible Communication

UNI shall seek to make applied research knowledge accessible to relevant audiences in appropriate formats.

Researchers should consider audience needs and avoid unnecessary technical barriers where public, professional or community users are intended.

Where appropriate, outputs should be communicated through accessible formats, open platforms, professional networks and community engagement channels.

Confidential, personal, commercially sensitive or otherwise restricted information shall not be disclosed without appropriate authorisation.

Article 31:

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Applied research and knowledge exchange shall form part of UNI's institutional quality culture.

UNI shall use research and knowledge-exchange evidence to support institutional planning, programme development and review, curriculum improvement, stakeholder engagement, professional relevance, student learning opportunities and strategic decision-making.

Monitoring and evaluation findings shall identify strengths, gaps, risks and opportunities for improvement.

Implementation shall follow a continuous improvement cycle in which applied research activities are planned, implemented, monitored, evaluated and improved.

Article 32:

Reporting and Transparency

Relevant UNI units shall report periodically on applied research and knowledge exchange.

Reporting may include research activity, collaborations, funding, outputs, knowledge exchange, impact, student involvement, stakeholder engagement, risks and improvement actions.

Where appropriate, UNI may publish information on applied research activities and achievements through institutional communication channels.

Article 33:

Review of Research Collaborations

Significant research collaborations shall be reviewed periodically to determine whether they meet objectives, remain strategically relevant, provide meaningful benefit, comply with requirements, remain viable, have generated appropriate outputs and impact, and should be renewed, modified or concluded.

Review outcomes shall inform future collaboration decisions.

Article 34:

Policy Review

This Policy shall be reviewed periodically and may be revised in response to changes in legislation or regulation, institutional strategy, research practice, international standards, monitoring and evaluation findings, stakeholder feedback and opportunities for improvement.

The Policy shall remain consistent with UNI's mission, strategic priorities and institutional governance framework.

Article 35:

Final Provisions

This Policy applies to all relevant applied research and knowledge exchange activities undertaken under the auspices of UNI.

Where another UNI policy, regulation, agreement or applicable legal requirement imposes a higher or more specific standard, that requirement shall prevail.

Implementation procedures, guidelines, templates and supporting documentation may be developed to operationalise this Policy.

The Policy shall enter into force upon approval by the competent UNI governing body.

Isabel Salvat
Chair of Academic Council