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JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY

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1.0 Interpretation of Operational Terms of the Policy

i.) Conflict of Interest: this situation will exist when there is a divergence between an individual's private interests (competing interests) and his/her responsibilities to scientific and publishing activities such that a reasonable observer might wonder if the individual's behavior or judgment was motivated by considerations of his/her competing interests.

ii.) Intellectual Property: this is the result of creativity such as patents and copyrights or the ownership of an idea or design by the person who came up with it.

iii.) Journal: a newspaper or magazine that deals with a particular subject or professional activity.

iv.) Plagiarism: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

v.) Publication: the preparation or issuing of a book or journal or music for public sale or generally known. It occurs on the date on which copies of the work are first made available to the public.

1.1 Background of MRU

Muteesa I Royal University (MRU) was offered an operational license by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in 2005 and started its operations in 2007. The founding Chancellor of the University, who is also its Visitor, is His Majesty the Kabaka, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II. The genesis of modern education in Uganda is historically associated with the Kingdom of Buganda owing to the role that Sekabaka Muteesa I played in inviting the missionaries who introduced education in Uganda. Owing to this history, it is only befitting that the University was named after this visionary leader. Hence, the University was named after the 31st King of Buganda who was a monarch of great vision, Kabaka Muteesa I (1856-1884). MRU is a skills training, academic and research-oriented institution of higher learning that was established as a private institution. The initiative was promoted by the Executive Committee (EC) of the Buganda Kingdom, headed by the *Katikkiro* (i.e., Prime Minister).

1.2 Strategic Goals of MRU

The Strategic Goals of MRU are as follows:

i. To produce graduates with all-round competencies and skills to be able to initiate self-employment activities or compete for jobs in the global market;

ii. To promote research and encourage students and staff to publish;

iii. To build and expand collaboration and engagement with the community, the alumni, and industry and business, and to equip students with practical skills while empowering the community, industry & business to develop local solutions;

iv. To strengthen MRU's human resource capacity;

v. To achieve a sustainable financial resource base;

vi. To improve the administrative and organizational arrangements of MRU with a view to achieving efficiency and effectiveness in all sections of MRU; and

vii. To construct or acquire, rehabilitate and maintain buildings, equipment, implements, ICT facilities and land particularly for the growth and development of its niche.

1.3 Vision of MRU

The Vision of MRU is to be "a leading university responding to contemporary challenges through teaching and learning, research and technical guidance".

1.4 Mission of MRU

The Mission of MRU is "to provide training, research and technical guidance responsive to national socio–economic needs".

1.5 Core Values of MRU

The core values of MRU are as follows:

i. Professionalism; Professionalism is a trait that's highly valued in the human resource of any organization. It has many attributes, including: (a) Specialized knowledge, (b) Competency, (c) Honesty and integrity, (d) Respect, (e) Accountability, (f) Self-regulation, and (g) Image.
ii. Respect for Diversity;
iii. Cultural Sensitivity;
iv. Tenacity; and
v. Team Spirit.

2.0 Introduction of the Policy

MRU is committed to fostering the meaningful exchange of information to help create an environment for constructive criticism and free exchange of ideas. As publisher of the Journal, MRU expects authors to adhere to the highest standards of integrity in research and the communication of research results and findings. Manuscripts submitted to MRU Journal should include enough information (including in-text, Web appendix, or other online supplements) so as to allow a reasonably trained researcher to replicate the results. This should include a precise description of the research and analysis procedures. The MRU Journal requires the authors of manuscripts submitted to it to share additional details of their research findings and insights when requested by the Journal Editor.

3.0 Objectives of the Policy

i. To enable the exchange of scholarly information in order to create an enabling environment for constructive engagement and criticism and free exchange of intellectual ideas;
ii. To ensure that authors adhere to the highest standards of integrity in scientific research and dissemination of the same;
iii. To defend the freedom of expression and information sharing to support the country's development and other countries; and
iv. To defend intellectual property.

4.0 Application of the Policy

This Policy shall be applicable to all persons charged with research and communication of scholarly works such as research results or findings at MRU.

5.0 Additional Supplementary Materials during the Review Process

During the review process, the Journal Editor may request additional materials - including data - if he/she sees it as essential for judging the merits of the research. Data and other requested materials shall be reviewed confidentially by the review team. The Journal Editor must be notified in advance if such requests could not be met due to proprietary or other restrictions.

6.0 Dissemination of Additional Supplementary Materials

In addition to providing a detailed description of research procedures, authors of manuscripts accepted for publication in MRU Journal are encouraged to post additional supplementary materials that would support replication of their research, including data materials. The MRU will provide a free, un-gated platform for authors and scholars to upload, download, and discuss any such materials. Interested parties may also contact authors directly to request additional materials to facilitate replication.

7.0 Protecting Intellectual Property

i. MRU is committed to the protection of intellectual property. When supplementary materials are requested during the review period, they will be subjected to its double-blind peer-review process in order to maintain author anonymity. However, author anonymity is not uniform for all manuscripts submitted to MRU Journal regarding Area Editors (AEs) or Associate Editors (AEs). It is at the discretion of the sitting editor if AEs are made aware of author identification;
ii. Reviewer team members will not use ideas from or show another person the manuscript or supplementary materials they have been asked to review without the explicit permission of the manuscript's author which can only be obtained through the Journal Editor. Advice regarding specific, limited aspects of the manuscript may be sought from colleagues with specific expertise, provided the author's identity and intellectual property remain secure; and
iii. Protecting intellectual property is a primary responsibility of the reviewer and the editor. Reviewers, therefore, will not use ideas from or show another person the manuscript they have been asked to review without the explicit permission of the manuscript's author, obtained through the Journal Editor. Advice regarding specific, limited aspects of the manuscript may be sought from colleagues with specific expertise, provided the author's identity and intellectual property remain secure.

8.0 Falsification of Data/Misreporting of Data

- MRU expects all submissions to include data that are honestly and accurately reported according to the accepted best practices of scholarly publishing. In instances in which falsified or misreported data are suspected, the procedures outlined below will be followed. In any instance of suspected misconduct, MRU pledges to carry out the process of detection, investigation, and penalty with fairness and confidentiality during the internal inquiry. The process for detection, investigation, and, if necessary, penalty and retraction for suspected falsification/misreporting of data is as follows:

8.1 Detection

The Journal Editor, along with the Editorial Board and non–Editorial Board reviewers, will serve to detect instances of data falsification. When an Editor suspects malfeasance (or is informed by a reviewer who suspects malfeasance), he/she will make a judgment whether the claim has any merit. If the Editor determines that there has been potential misconduct, he/she will inform both the Chief Editor and Advisory Board and provide a detailed account of the possible violation or misconduct. In the case where work has been published, readers suspecting falsification/misreporting should contact the Editor. The sitting Editor will then review the case, operating under the policies provided herein.

8.2 Investigation

i. When informed by the Journal Editor, the Editorial Board will determine whether further investigation is required. The Chief Editor may choose to assemble a review committee of scholars to determine the exact nature and extent of the suspected misconduct. Each individual investigation may warrant the assembly of a new *ad hoc* committee. Any committee member who is perceived to have a Conflict of Interest must recuse himself/herself from the process. The Editor of the Journal in question will not serve on the committee. If it is determined that an act of misconduct has been committed, the Chief Editor will inform the author(s), in writing, with a detailed description of the alleged offense. The Chief Editor will offer the author(s) an opportunity to respond to the allegation. In events in which more than one author is involved, the authors may collaborate on their response or respond individually. If the committee concludes that no offense has been committed, no further action will be taken, and the Chief Editor will inform the authors. If the committee determines that there has been misconduct, the process will move into a penalty phase;

ii. In order to conduct a full and fair investigation, authors may be required to provide materials that go above and beyond the aforementioned (requesting supplementary materials). If a manuscript uses proprietary data covered by a non-disclosure agreement signed by the author(s), and the author(s) are not able to meet the data requirements, the committee chair may ask for specific (appropriately redacted) details of the agreement that prevent the authors from providing the required materials. The committee may choose to provide an exemption. If the committee chooses not to waive the requirements, the author(s) will have the option of withdrawing the manuscript from the Journal review process. However, in such cases, the committee chair may determine to continue the investigation and levy a penalty if misconduct is suspected; and

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iii. All information provided will be used solely for conducting the investigation. All information will remain private and will not be distributed beyond the investigating committee. All materials will be destroyed upon the conclusion of the investigation.

8.3 Penalty

In the event that an author (or authors) is/are found to have engaged in some form of misconduct, he/she will be subject to a penalty, the nature and extent of which will be determined by the Journal and Publication Committee with the advice and counsel of the committee members. The penalty will be commensurate with the nature of the offense and will likely include a ban on submitting to any Journal for a period of time to be determined by the Committee. The necessary authorities of MRU shall be informed of the penalty. The committee is empowered to customize penalties for each individual author in instances in which multiple authors are involved. In extreme circumstances, the committee reserves the right to inform an author's institution, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

8.4 Article Retraction

In the event that ethical misconduct (e.g. misrepresentation/falsification of data, pervasive errors, plagiarism, multiple submission, etc.) is determined to have occurred in a manuscript published in an MRU Journal, MRU reserves the right to issue a public retraction of the manuscript in question. The retraction will come in the form of a note published in a subsequent issue of the Journal. The article's citation will be labeled as "Retracted" in all databases and the electronic version of the manuscript file will be clearly marked as "Retracted."

9.0 Concurrent Reviews

The Journal and Publication Policy prohibits an article under review in an MRU Journal from being concurrently reviewed at another Journal without prior discussion with and written permission from MRU's Journal Editor.

10.0 Author Misconduct Procedures

10.1 Overview

As a publisher of peer-reviewed Journal, MRU requires all submissions to MRU Journal adhere to the highest of ethical standards and best practices in publishing. All writing and research submitted to an MRU Journal is expected to present accurate information and to properly cite all content referenced from other materials.

10.2 Overlap

i. The value of a publication depends on its incremental contribution. Therefore, it is inappropriate to submit articles with substantial overlap. This overlap can result from the use of the same data or analyses or when providing parallel substantive or theoretical results. When there is a question about defining overlaps, particularly that

which arises from their own work, it is the author's responsibility to notify and alert the Editor. The Editor will make a binding decision whether a manuscript submitted to an MRU Journal is too similar to an article already published there or elsewhere; and

ii. When writing a paper, it is important for an author to define its incremental contribution by referencing relevant work on which it builds. Authors are expected to search for and reference the related work of others. An author is especially responsible for informing the Editor about his/her own work, whether it is published, in working paper form, or under review. When questions arise about related work, the Editor will provide guidance to the author. Submitting a paper that is substantially the same as a previously published paper is considered a serious breach of professional ethics and may warrant the Editor contacting officials at the author's institution of this breach. In the event that the author(s) is not affiliated with an institution, alternative steps may be taken, including a ban from submitting to MRU Journal.

10.3 Plagiarism

i. As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, to plagiarize is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own," "use (another's production) without crediting the source," or to "present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source"; and

ii. MRU considers other forms of plagiarism to include "self-plagiarism" - instances in which an author borrows from his/her own previously published work without proper citation. It is also unacceptable to submit manuscripts to MRU Journal that have previously been published anywhere in any language. It is the author's responsibility to inform or notify the Editor upon submission if there is any doubt whether a manuscript may violate any of these terms.

10.4 Detection, Investigation, and Penalty

- In any instance of suspected misconduct, MRU pledges to carry out the process of detection, investigation, and penalty with fairness and confidentiality during the internal investigation. The process for detection, investigation, and penalty for suspected plagiarism is as follows:

10.4.1 Detection

Mru's journal Editor, along with the Editorial Board and non–Editorial Board reviewers, will serve to detect instances of plagiarism. When an Editor suspects plagiarism (or is informed by a reviewer who suspects plagiarism), he/she will make a judgment whether the claim has any merit. If the Editor determines that there has been potential misconduct, he/she will inform both the Chief Editor and Advisory Board providing a detailed account of the possible violation or misconduct.

10.4.2 Investigation

When informed by the Journal Editor, the Journal and Publication Committee will determine whether further investigation is required. The Journal and Publication Committee may choose to assemble a review committee of scholars to determine the exact nature and extent of the suspected misconduct. Each individual investigation may warrant the assembly of a new *ad hoc* committee. Any committee member who is perceived to have a Conflict of Interest must recuse himself/herself from the process. The Editor of the Journal in question will not serve on the committee. If it is determined that an act of plagiarism has been committed, the Chief Editor will inform the author(s), in writing, with a detailed description of the alleged offense. The Chairperson of the Journal and Publication Committee will offer the author(s) an opportunity to respond to the allegation. In events in which more than one author is involved, the authors may collaborate on their response or respond individually. If the Committee concludes that no offense has been committed, no further action will be taken, and the Chairperson of the Journal and Publication Committee will inform the author(s). If the Committee determines that there has been misconduct, the process will move into a penalty phase.

10.4.3 Penalty

In the event that an author(s) has/have been found to have engaged in some form of misconduct, he/she or they shall be subjected to a penalty. The nature and extent of the penalty will be determined by the Chief Editor with the advice and counsel of the committee members. The penalty will be dictated by the nature of the offense and will likely include a ban on submitting to any Journal published by the MRU for a period of time. The Editor of MRU Journal shall be informed. The Committee is empowered to customize penalties for each individual in instances in which multiple authors are involved. In extreme circumstances, the committee reserves the right to inform an author's institution, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

10.5 Falsification of Data/Misreporting of Data

MRU expects all submissions of manuscripts to include data that are honestly and accurately reported according to the accepted best practices of scholarly publishing. In instances in which falsified or grossly misreported data are suspected, the process outlined above (see Plagiarism) will be activated.

11.0 Resubmissions

Manuscripts that have been rejected are not eligible for further consideration by MRU Journal and thus should not be resubmitted. If a revision is allowed, it will be explicitly stated in the Editor's decision. Other revisions of previously rejected manuscripts will be promptly returned to the author(s) without review.

12.0 Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of Interest may arise in a variety of situations, and, therefore, the author is required to inform the Editor of such conflict. A Conflict of Interest may exist when a manuscript under review puts forth a position contrary to the reviewer's published work or when a manuscript's author or reviewer has a substantial direct or indirect financial interest in the subject matter of the manuscript. Because it is MRU's policy to engage in a double-blind review process, a Conflict of Interest may also exist when a reviewer knows the author of a manuscript. The reviewer should consult the Journal Editor in such situations to decide whether to review the manuscript. A Conflict of Interest does not exist when an author disagrees with a reviewer's assessment that a problem is unimportant or disagrees with an editorial outcome.

13.0 Sharing of Reviewing Responsibilities

Sharing of reviewing responsibilities is inappropriate. The review is the sole responsibility of the person to whom it was assigned by the journal editor. Students and colleagues should not be asked to prepare reviews unless the journal editor has given explicit prior approval. Each person contributing to a review should receive formal recognition.

14.0 Review Process

All reviews will use a double-blind review process. Reviewers and Journal Editor are expected to provide comments and critiques in a confidential, constructive, prompt, and unbiased manner appropriate for their position of responsibility. Collegiality, respect for the author's dignity, and the search for ways to improve the quality of the manuscript should characterize the review process. The Editor has the final authority for the acceptance or rejection of any article.

15.0 Reviewers' Guidelines

15.1 Introduction

The review process is an important aspect of the publication process of an article. It helps an editor in making decisions on an article and also enables the author to improve the manuscript. Academic Journal operates a blind peer review system. Before accepting to review a manuscript reviewers should ensure that:

- The manuscript is within their area of expertise; and
- They can dedicate the appropriate time to conduct a critical review of the manuscript.

15.2 Conflict of Interest

Reviewers should declare their Conflicts of Interest and recuse themselves from the peer-review process if a conflict exists.

15.3 Confidentiality

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Manuscripts are confidential materials given to a reviewer in trust for the sole purpose of critical evaluation. Reviewers should ensure that the review processes is confidential. Details of the manuscript and the review process should remain confidential during and after the review process.

15.4 Plagiarism

It is unethical for reviewers to "use information obtained during the peer-review process for their own or any other person's or organization's advantage or to disadvantage or discredit others"

15.5 Fairness

Reviews should be honest and objective. Reviewers should not be influenced by:

- The origin of the manuscript;
- Religious, political or cultural viewpoint of the author; and
- Gender, race, ethnicity or citizenry of the author.

15.6 Review Reports

In evaluating a manuscript, reviewers should focus on the following:

- Originality;
- Contribution to the field;
- Technical quality;
- Clarity of presentation; and
- Depth of research

Reviewers should also:

- Observe that the author(s) have followed the instruction for authors, editorial policies and publication ethics;
- Observe that the appropriate Journal's reporting guidelines is followed. The report should be accurate, objective, constructive and unambiguous. Comments should be backed by facts and constructive arguments with regards to the content of the manuscript. Reviewers should avoid using "hostile, derogatory and accusatory comments"; and
- Reviewers should not rewrite the manuscript; however necessary corrections and suggestions for improvements should be made.

15.7 Timeliness

Reviewers should only accept manuscript that they are confident that they can dedicate appropriate time in reviewing. Thus, reviewers should review and return manuscripts in a timely manner.

15.8 Recommendations

Reviewers' recommendation should be either:

- Accept;
- Requires minor corrections;
- Requires moderate revision;
- Requires major revision;
- Not suitable for the Journal. Submit to another publication such as (suggest a Journal); and
- Reject.

Recommendation should be backed with constructive arguments and facts based on the content of the manuscript.

16.0 Establishment of a Journal and Publication Committee to Implement the Policy

MRU Council shall set up a Journals and Publications Committee (JPC) to be responsible for all matters dealing with scholarly articles for publication in MRU Journal. The Committee shall comprise of senior members of the academic staff and shall initially have five members, namely: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and two members. It will define its Terms of Reference and other incidental matters (e.g., number of words in an article, font to be used, APA referencing style, etc.) that will be critical in conducting its business and in the publication of the MRU Journal.

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