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CHE: Putting the 'Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices' into practice

Following a Workshop on the Ethics of Scholarly Publishing on 11 April 2018, and with the collective goal of advancing research integrity in South Africa, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), the Council for Higher Education (CHE), the National Research Foundation (NRF), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Universities South Africa (USAf) signed the joint Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices in Pretoria on 31 July 2019.

The signatories were invited by the South African Journal of Science to outline to the South African research community how they individually and collectively will be 'putting the Statement into practice'.

As a signatory to the *Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices*, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) affirms its total commitment to the Statement in guiding its own research and publications.

The CHE conducts or commissions research on a variety of issues in higher education, including the size and shape of the higher education system, funding, governance, student governance, transformation, curriculum development, teaching and learning, and policy. The outputs of its research include unpublished internal research reports; papers published in its journal, *Kagisano*; papers published in external journals; other CHE periodicals and monographs, including the *Higher Education Monitor*; books and/or book chapters; proceedings from its conferences, frameworks, and good practice guides.

The *Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices*, 2019, will henceforth be an integral part of the editorial policy for all internally managed and produced publications of the CHE. Key principles from the Statement, such as 'responsibility', 'ethics and integrity', 'methodology and data', 'acknowledgement of contribution', 'peer review', and 'social awareness' have also been included in the guidelines or instructions to contributors of manuscripts for publication in the CHE journal *Kagisano*. Potential contributors have to demonstrate adherence to these principles in order to have their manuscripts accepted for publication.

The CHE is in the process of formulating its policy on research, and it is envisaged that one of the chapters in the research policy will be on 'Research Ethics'. The principles in the Statement are anticipated to find expression in that chapter. A related objective is to establish a Research Ethics Committee whose membership will include external research ethicists. The policy will further stipulate that any research project to be conducted or commissioned by the CHE will have to be cleared by the Research Ethics Committee before commencement of the research.

The CHE organised a conference on the theme 'Promoting Academic Integrity in Higher Education' in February 2019, which attracted 200 participants from eight countries on the continent. Some of the papers presented at the conference are published in this issue of the *South African Journal of Science*, a themed issue focused on academic integrity and quality assurance.

In 2018, the CHE, in collaboration with the National Research Foundation, convened a workshop to highlight the breaches of academic integrity associated with publishing in predatory journals. A year earlier, in August 2017, the CHE published in its online occasional papers called *Briefly Speaking*, an article on 'Research Publication Ethics', in which it reflected on publication in predatory journals.

The CHE has a standing practice of not paying financial rewards to researchers or authors responsible for outputs, for in the view of the CHE, this is a perverse incentive which has led to a focus on numbers and personal gain rather than quality in outputs. Our policy assists in curbing the urge to publish for the sake of earning additional personal income.