



# Reflecting on the implementation of a newly developed integrated research integrity management system: North-West University, South Africa

Abstract 127

2 to 5 June 2024

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# Background



During the 2022 WRIC, I presented on the newly developed **Integrated Research Management System (IRIMS)** for the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the North-West University (NWU), South Africa.



The success of this endeavor in the FHS, prompted the NWU management to roll the IRIMS out to the remaining seven (7) faculties in 2022, with the full support of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation and the Registrar.



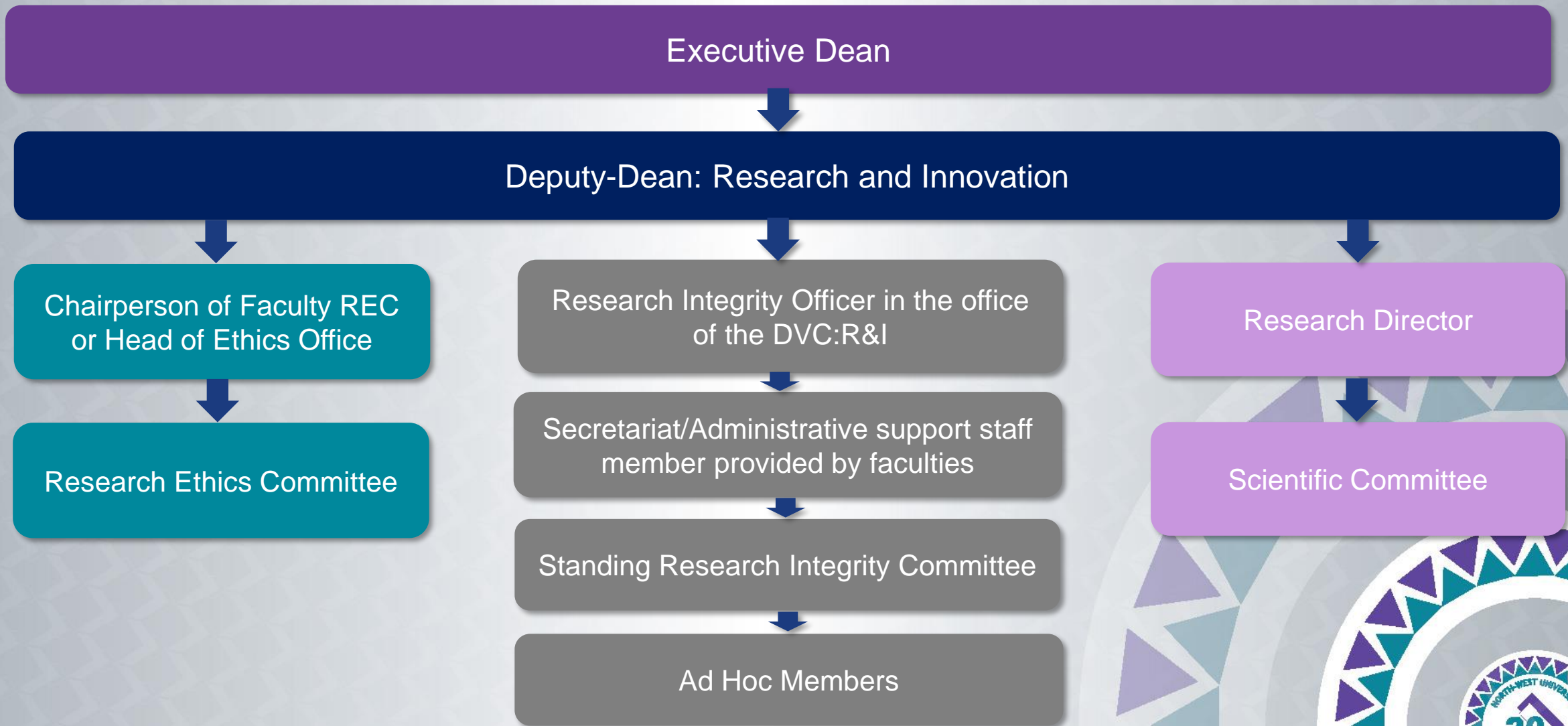
It became known as the **NWU Integrated Research Management System (IRIMS)** and is supported by specific organizational structures.



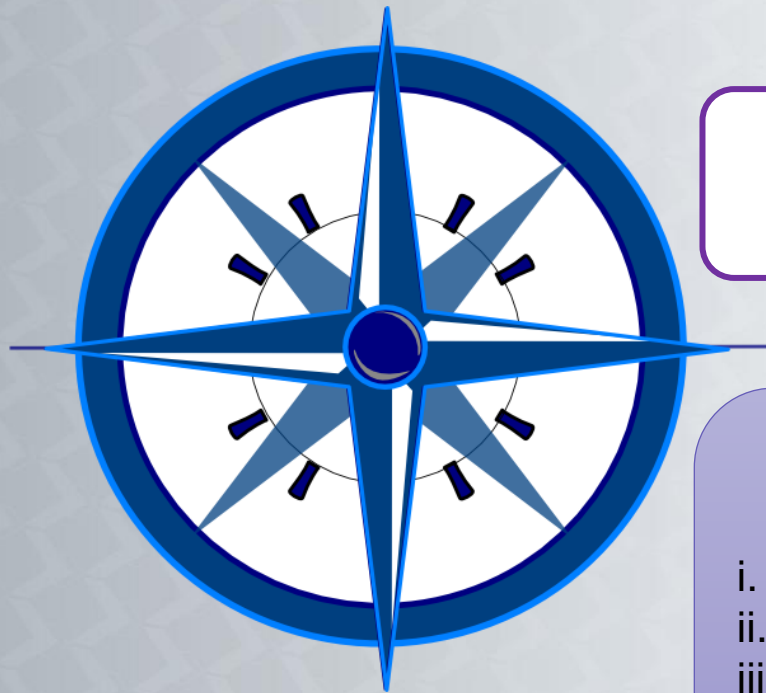
IRIMS webpage:  
<https://www.nwu.ac.za/irims>



# The organizational structure for research integrity



# The Integrated Research Integrity Management System



## NWU Integrated Research Integrity Management System (IRIMS)

Foster a **climate** of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR).

- i. Support
- ii. Organization
- iii. Communication
- iv. Training

Climate

Effectively manage **potential breaches** in research integrity through acts of:

- i. Research non-compliance
- ii. Violation of good research practice
- iii. Research misconduct

Potential breaches



# The NWU IRIMS includes:

1.

An approved framework for fostering a climate of responsible conduct of research (RCR) through support, organization, communication, and training.

2.

The various SOPs for handling breaches in research integrity, either:

- On an **intra-faculty level.**
- OR
- By **escalating** to office of Registrar (staff) or Student Judicial Office (postgrad students) for disciplinary action.



Area	Element	
Support	Research environment	
	Research study supervision	
	Mentoring	
Organization	Research ethics structure	
	Scientific committee structure	
	Integrated Research Integrity Management System (IRIMS)	
	Data management system and management practices	
	Fair research assessment practices	
Communication	Research collaboration	
	Declaration of interests	
	Stakeholder/external organization communication	
	Publication and communication	
	Research ethics and research integrity webpage	
Training	Research ethics and research integrity training	
	<i>Academics</i>	<i>Postgraduate students</i>

# Framework for fostering a climate of Responsible Conduct of Research

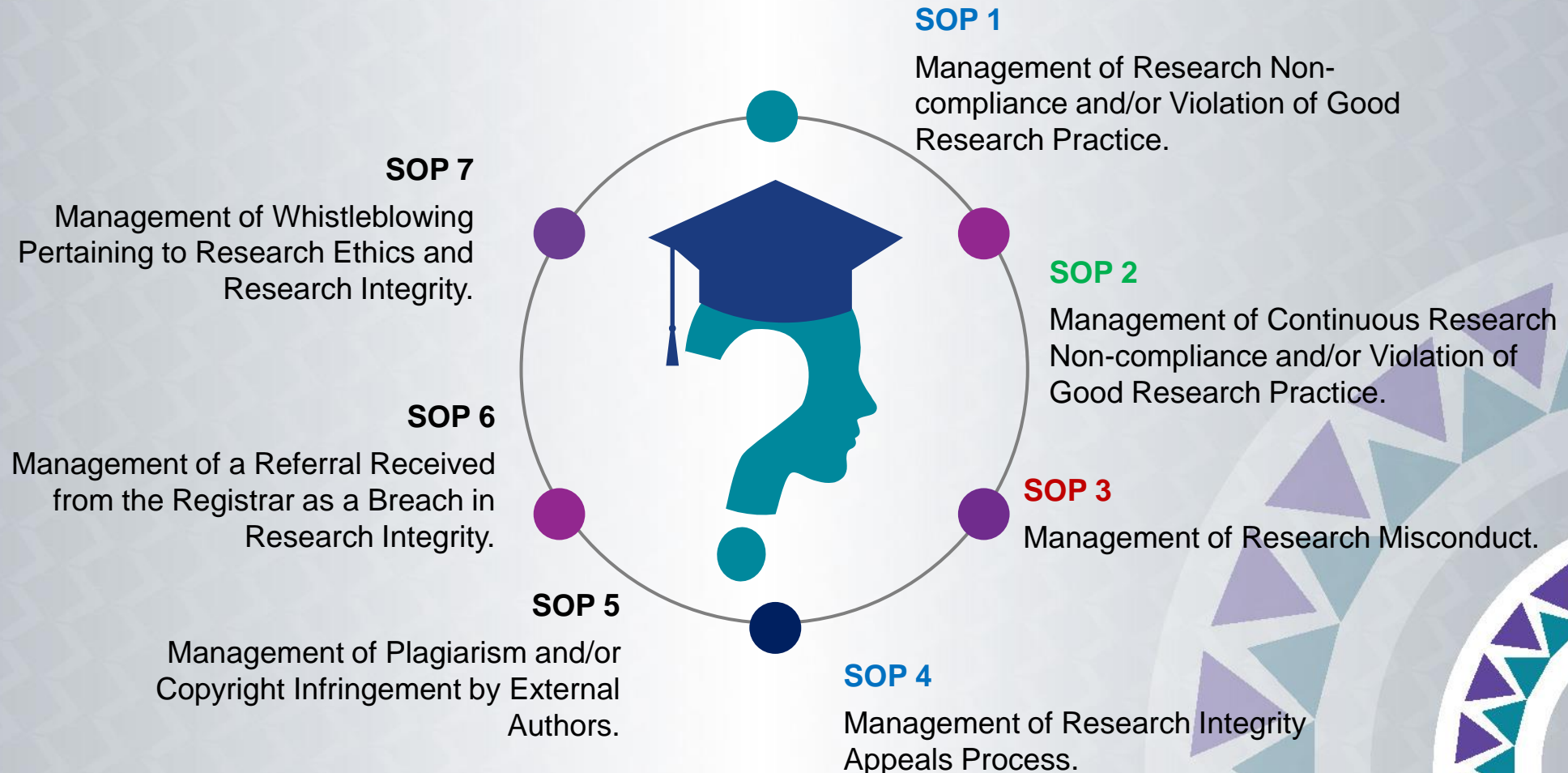


# Continuum of breaches and research misconduct



# SOPs for handling breaches

Various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) describe the functioning of the system





# Two very specific ways of handling breaches

1. Handling research non-compliance and violation of good research practice on an **intra-faculty level**, as a **restorative process** by undertaking **individualized mentorship**.
2. Handling research misconduct (FFP) as prescribed by the NWU Policy on Academic Integrity (2021) by **escalating** it to either the Registrar's office (for staff) or the Student Judicial Office (for post graduate students) for **disciplinary action**.

# Process followed to get buy in and approval of IRIMS



Due to it being a newly developed research integrity system, the focus in 2022 was getting the buy in of various groups, as well as having it approved in all faculties.



A bottom up buy in approach was followed.

1

Started with information sessions, where IRIMS was firstly presented to deanery (executive and deputy deans) of all faculties.

2

Faculty management was targeted, included Research and School Directors, Heads of Research Ethics Offices or REC Chairpersons, via presentation of an IRIMS information session.

3

Approval of all research integrity SOPs was obtained through all the Faculty Boards and then from the Senate of the institution.

4

All faculties had to appoint their Standing Research Integrity Committees (SRIC) consisting of the DD: R&I, the RIO in the office of the DVC: R&I, REC chairperson and elected Research Director, for a period of three years.



# Process followed to get buy in and approval of IRIMS

- 5 2022 introduced research integrity web page to ensure access.
- 6 Lots of training on IRIMS to academia, in various formats (faculty-, small group - research entity discussions) 1<sup>st</sup> focused on breaches then on fostering a climate of RCR.
- 7 Faculties spontaneously developing own research integrity promotion plans (RIPP).
- 8 The next focus was training of all postgraduate students, on the IRIMS, through many training sessions.
- 9 Additional sessions to Deputy Deans: R&I and Research Directors, made them comfortable with future research integrity processes.
- 10 From 2023, attendance of IRIMS training became compulsory. Training sessions are presented every quarter by the RIO.

<https://www.nwu.ac.za/irims>



# Lessons learnt in the past three years

Both “good and bad” lessons were learnt, when reflecting on the past three years.

## What was more challenging

Resistance and an attitude of “but we do not do these things” from some academics.

Some researchers believing that they can learn nothing more about research integrity.

Deans and Research Directors showing fear of exposing weak spots in their faculties or research entities.

The daunting experience of going through an appeals process although valuable.

Having the support of senior management was a bonus.

Working in a bottom-up fashion, accelerated the inclusion processes.

Buy-in and support ensured an effective system.

The appeals process showed the strength of the system and that it is trustworthy.

**Note:** There is a poster presented on this.

Expressed gratitude for the mentorship process (mentees and mentors).

Tearoom discussions increased and contributed to awareness about the IRIMS.

## What worked well





**Thank you**

