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NRF: 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'.

Given its mandate of supporting knowledge creation coupled to human capacity development, the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, as the premier Science Granting Council, considers itself to be one of the guardians of ethics in the conducting of research and publishing practices. This position has been expressed through various statements and documents over the years which include participation in the production of and commitment to advancing the principles expressed in the 2010 *Singapore Statement on Research Integrity* and the *Statement of Principles for Research Integrity* adopted by the Global Research Council in 2013, which collectively call for ethics in research and scholarly publication. Concerned with the extent to which indications of unethical behaviour emerged in scholarly publications, the NRF issued its own *Statement on Predatory Journals and Deceptive Publishers* in 2017. This Statement essentially sought to sensitise stakeholders to a growth in predatory publishing practices and to advise researchers and students of the need for more robust quality and ethical controls in the review of research proposals and in resultant scholarly publications. As a result of NRF's position on ethical research and scholarly publishing practices, the NRF found it appropriate to spearhead the formulation of a joint *Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices* that set out a national position on the issue of research ethics and scholarly publishing. This joint Statement is the first concrete outcome of the broader objective underpinning the workshop from which the Statement evolved.

The NRF remains committed to giving life and meaning to the Statement through the following actions, which are at various stages of implementation:

1. Maintaining the momentum of actions through the Working Group comprising representatives from the signatories to the joint Statement and beyond. This group will identify and drive actions that will advance the principles of the Statement and the broader objectives of the workshop. An example in this regard is developing a uniform identification system for predatory journals.
1. Distributing the Statement to stakeholders through various communication platforms. The Statement has been published on the [NRF website](#) and has been shared at the NRF's Research Administrators' Workshop – an annual event at which the NRF shares new developments and addresses NRF-related issues raised by the research community.
2. Making the document available to all research institutions as a reference/support document for the reviewing and evaluation of submissions to the NRF. The document will also be shared and engaged at training and briefing sessions for the various role players in the reviewing of NRF applications.
3. Updating, as appropriate, terms and clauses in calls, reviews and awarding documents.