



SIKKIM ALPINE UNIVERSITY

Kamrang, Namchi, South Sikkim – 737126

(Established under Sikkim Alpine University Act, 2021)

GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CELL (RDC)

(Policy Document – 2025)

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Warm Regards,

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Amendment Clause

This Research & Development Cell Policy is a dynamic and evolving document. It is subject to revision, modification, or amendment based on updates in UGC regulations, directives under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, changes in national or state policies, evolving institutional requirements, and the recommendations of the Research & Development Cell. Any such revisions shall come into effect only upon approval of the Academic Council of Sikkim Alpine University.

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DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Research & Development (R&D) Policy, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them:

1. Research

Any systematic investigation undertaken to discover new knowledge, generate insights, interpret existing information, or develop innovative applications, across all disciplines including Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Indigenous Knowledge, Languages, and Interdisciplinary fields.

2. Researcher

Any individual engaged in research activities within the University, including faculty members, research scholars, postgraduate and undergraduate students, visiting researchers, project staff, and collaborators using University resources.

3. Principal Investigator (PI)

A faculty member or researcher who leads a research project, is responsible for project design, execution, reporting, financial management, and compliance with institutional and funding agency regulations.

4. Research & Development Cell (RDC)

The institutional body responsible for planning, coordinating, promoting, monitoring, and ensuring the quality and integrity of research activities across the University.

5. Research Advisory Board (RAB)

A committee comprising internal and external experts that provides guidance on research directions, standards, collaborative opportunities, and institutional strategies.

6. Departmental Research Committee (DRC)

A departmental body responsible for evaluating research proposals, supervising student research progress, ensuring ethical compliance, and providing academic guidance within each School/Department.

7. Academic Integrity

Commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect in scholarly work, encompassing ethical writing, proper citation, originality, and avoidance of academic misconduct.

8. Plagiarism

As per UGC 2018 Regulations, plagiarism refers to the practice of using another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit. It includes verbatim copying, paraphrasing without acknowledgment, self-plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, and improper citation practices.

9. Indigenous Knowledge

Traditional, cultural, linguistic, ecological, medicinal, or historical knowledge possessed by local communities, including Lepcha, Limboo, and tribal groups, documented or transmitted orally.

10. Ethics Committees

Institutional committees such as the Human Ethics Committee (HEC), Institutional Animal Ethics Committee (IAEC), and Institutional Biosafety Committee responsible for reviewing and approving research involving human participants, animals, biological materials, or environmental interactions.

11. Innovation and Incubation

Processes that support idea generation, prototype development, entrepreneurship, and start-up creation through innovation cells, incubation centres, and University-supported innovation ecosystems.

12. Intellectual Property (IP)

Creations of the mind such as inventions, designs, copyrights, trademarks, artistic works, cultural documentation, software, and traditional knowledge that may be legally protected.

13. Funded Research

Research supported by financial grants from internal or external funding agencies including DST, DBT, ICSSR, UGC, CSR bodies, industries, government departments, or international organizations.

14. Consultancy

Expert services provided by University faculty or researchers to external organizations in exchange for professional fees, as per University rules.

15. Research Data

All raw, processed, or analyzed data generated through research activities, including laboratory results, field notes, transcripts, recordings, observations, digital files, images, and documents.

16. Conflict of Interest

A situation in which a faculty member, researcher, or committee member has a personal, financial, or professional interest that may compromise or appear to compromise their objectivity or decision-making in research-related matters.

17. Interdisciplinary Research

Research that integrates methods, theories, tools, or frameworks from multiple disciplines to address complex scientific, social, cultural, or environmental questions.

SCOPE & APPLICABILITY

This Research & Development (R&D) Policy applies to all research, innovation, consultancy, and scholarly activities conducted under Sikkim Alpine University. It extends across all Schools, Departments, Centres, and Units of the University, covering all disciplines—including Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems—irrespective of the mode of study or funding source. This policy provides a unified framework for supporting research excellence in alignment with NEP 2020, UGC guidelines, and institutional vision.

This policy applies to the following groups:

1. Faculty Members

All full-time, part-time, contractual, visiting, adjunct, and emeritus faculty engaged in research, supervision, consultancy, publication, or innovation activities.

2. Research Scholars

All registered Ph.D. scholars of the University.

3. Postgraduate & Undergraduate Students

All postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) students engaged in research components of their curriculum, including:

- a) Dissertation work
- b) Minor/major research projects
- c) Fieldwork and internships
- d) Community-based studies
- e) Laboratory-based or field-based investigations

4. Research & Project Staff

All individuals including:

- a) Project assistants
- b) Research associates
- c) Post-doctoral fellows
- d) Technical/lab staff
- e) Staff employed under externally funded research projects

5. Institutional Research Units

This policy governs all research-related units such as:

- a) Research & Development Cell (RDC)
- b) Departmental Research Committees (DRCs)
- c) Research Advisory Board (RAB)
- d) Ethics Committees
- e) Innovation & Incubation Cell
- f) Language, Culture & Indigenous Knowledge Centres
- g) Laboratories, field stations, and research hubs

6. External Collaborators

Any external entity collaborating with the University for research, including:

- a) Other universities and research institutions
- b) NGOs
- c) Government departments
- d) CSR bodies
- e) Industry partners
- f) Community organizations

These collaborators must comply with University research guidelines wherever applicable.

7. Indigenous Community–Based Research

Research involving:

- a) Lepcha, Limboo, and tribal communities
- b) Indigenous languages
- c) Oral traditions and folklore
- d) Cultural heritage and ethnographic documentation

Such research must strictly follow ethical guidelines, informed consent, and community rights.

8. All Forms of Research Output

This policy governs the creation, management, evaluation, and dissemination of all research outputs, including:

- a) Journal articles and conference papers
- b) Books, monographs, translations
- c) Linguistic corpora and dictionaries
- d) Oral histories and folklore documentation
- e) Artifacts, prototypes, models, and innovations
- f) Patents, copyrights, designs, and other IP

- g) Field notes, transcripts, datasets, recordings
- h) Student dissertations and project reports

9. Purpose of Applicability

This ensures uniform adherence to:

- a) Ethical standards
- b) Academic integrity and plagiarism regulations
- c) Research governance structures
- d) Data management rules
- e) IPR and funding policies
- f) Discipline-specific evaluation norms

Creating fairness, transparency, and excellence across all research activities at Sikkim Alpine University.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Sikkim Alpine University

Sikkim Alpine University, established in 2021 at Kamrang, Namchi, South Sikkim, was founded with the vision of strengthening quality higher education, advancing scientific research, and promoting inclusive academic growth in the North-Eastern region of India. As a young institution with emerging academic strengths, the University aims to nurture a research-oriented environment that encourages inquiry, innovation, and knowledge creation across disciplines. With its unique geographical location and academic mandate, the University is committed to developing research capacities that address both regional and global challenges.

1.2 Need for a Research & Development Cell

In order to cultivate a sustainable research culture and ensure systematic development of academic scholarship, it is essential to establish a dedicated Research & Development Cell (RDC). The RDC serves as a central coordinating body responsible for facilitating, monitoring, and promoting research activities across all Schools and Departments. It ensures that research initiatives are aligned with institutional priorities, supports faculty and student research, strengthens research governance, and establishes mechanisms for ethical practices, quality assurance, and external collaborations. As the University grows, a strong R&D framework becomes indispensable to guide research output, enhance academic credibility, and contribute meaningfully to societal needs.

1.3 Alignment with NEP 2020

The establishment of the RDC aligns directly with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes integrating research and innovation at the core of higher education. NEP 2020 advocates for inquiry-based learning, multidisciplinary research, capacity building, and the development of a robust ecosystem for high-quality research. By establishing structured research governance, ethical frameworks, and opportunities for innovation, the RDC will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the University meets NEP's expectations of a vibrant, research-driven academic environment. This alignment will strengthen faculty development, improve student research engagement, and enhance national and global academic contributions.

1.4 Alignment with Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Vision

The national mission of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat underscores the importance of self-reliance, indigenous innovation, and knowledge-driven development. In this context, the RDC will enable the University to contribute to national priorities by fostering creativity, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement. Through interdisciplinary research, innovation-led projects, and community-oriented studies, the RDC supports the development of locally relevant solutions that contribute to regional progress and national self-sufficiency. This aligns with the University's commitment to advancing research in environmental sciences, biodiversity, language processing, nonlinear dynamics, and indigenous knowledge systems that hold significance for the Eastern Himalayan region.

1.5 Objectives of the R&D Cell Policy

The primary objective of the R&D Cell Policy is to establish a comprehensive framework that strengthens the University's research ecosystem through effective governance, ethical standards, capacity building, and quality assurance. The policy aims to support faculty and student researchers, promote interdisciplinary and translational research, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, ensure compliance with UGC guidelines, and enhance the University's visibility in national and international academic platforms. By providing structured guidelines for research activities, collaborations, laboratory practices, academic integrity, and resource management, the policy seeks to advance the overall research output and societal impact of Sikkim Alpine University.

2. VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES OF THE R&D CELL

2.1 Vision Statement

The vision of the Research & Development Cell is to cultivate a vibrant, ethical, and multidisciplinary research ecosystem that advances scientific knowledge, fosters innovation, and contributes to regional and national development. The RDC aspires to position Sikkim Alpine University as a leading center of research excellence in the North-Eastern region by promoting high-quality scholarship, supporting discovery and creativity, and aligning institutional research priorities with NEP 2020, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, and global standards of academic excellence.

2.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the Research & Development Cell is to strengthen the University's research culture by facilitating impactful, inclusive, and ethically grounded research across all disciplines. The RDC aims to empower faculty, scholars, and students through effective research governance, capacity-building programs, funding opportunities, and collaborative platforms. It seeks to support high-quality publications, innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge transfer while ensuring compliance with UGC regulations, ethical norms, and quality benchmarks. Through these efforts, the RDC strives to contribute meaningfully to academic advancement, societal progress, and sustainable development.

2.3 Core Values

The Research & Development Cell upholds the following core values as the foundation of all research activities undertaken at the University:

2.3.1 Integrity

Upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct, honesty, transparency, and academic integrity in every stage of research, from conceptualization to dissemination.

2.3.2 Innovation

Encouraging creative thinking, original ideas, and the pursuit of novel solutions that contribute to scientific advancement and societal improvement.

2.3.3 Quality

Promoting excellence in research methodology, publications, laboratory practices, and scholarly output by adhering to national and international standards.

2.3.4 Inclusiveness

Fostering a research environment that is open, diverse, collaborative, and accessible to all faculty, scholars, and students irrespective of discipline or background.

2.3.5 Sustainability

Supporting research that is environmentally responsible, socially relevant, regionally meaningful, and aligned with long-term global sustainability goals, particularly in the Himalayan context.

3. RESEARCH GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

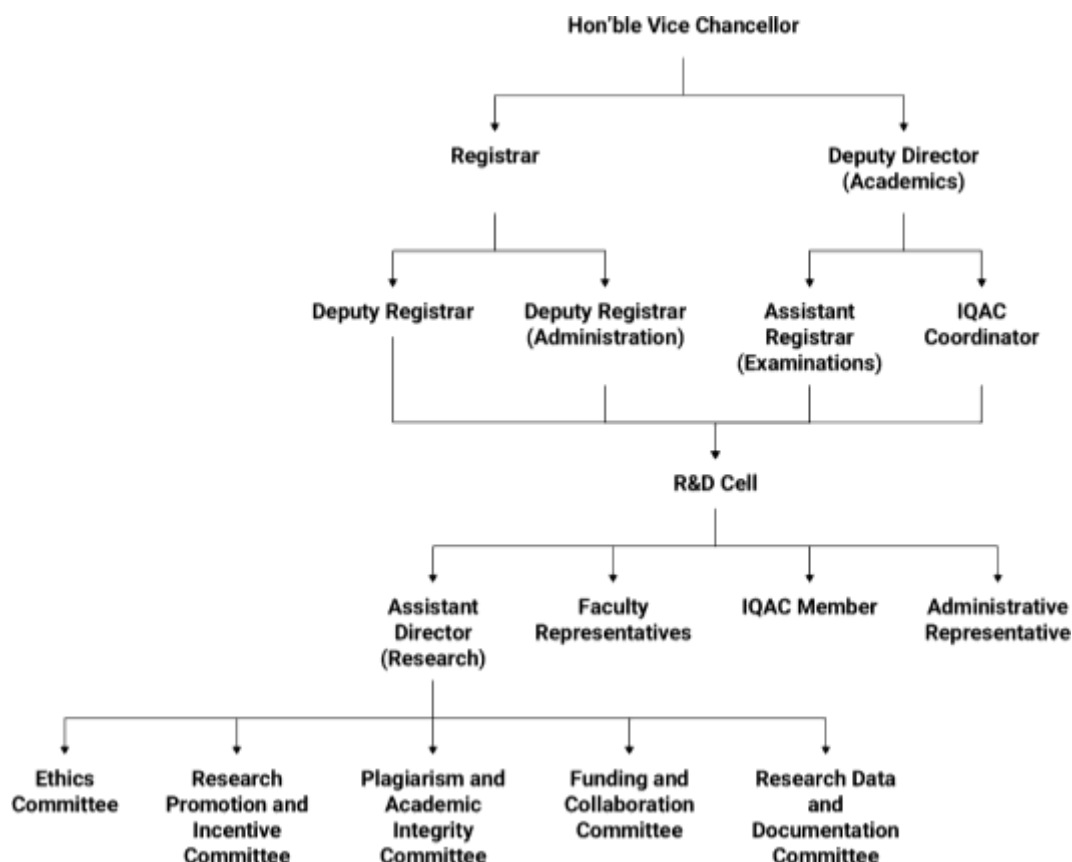
The Research Governance Structure of Sikkim Alpine University provides a systematic framework for planning, implementing, monitoring, and improving research activities across all Schools and Departments. It ensures transparency, accountability, ethical compliance, and quality assurance in line with UGC guidelines, NEP 2020 reforms, and institutional priorities. The structure consists of the central Research & Development Cell (RDC), the Research Advisory Board (RAB), the Departmental Research Committees (DRCs), and interdisciplinary research clusters. Together, these bodies coordinate academic, administrative, and ethical dimensions of research through a multi-tiered governance model.

3.1 Organizational Structure of the R&D Cell

The Research & Development Cell (RDC) functions under the overall academic and administrative leadership of the University and follows a structured hierarchy to ensure effective coordination, regulatory compliance, and smooth implementation of all research-related activities. At the apex of the governance structure is the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, who provides strategic direction and approves all major research policies and institutional decisions. The Registrar facilitates administrative procedures, notifications, and record management related to the RDC, while the Deputy Director (Academics) ensures academic alignment of research initiatives in accordance with NEP 2020. The Deputy Registrar and Deputy Registrar (Administration) provide administrative support, documentation oversight, and coordination with various departments. The Assistant Registrar (Examinations) ensures that research processes align with academic regulations and evaluation frameworks. The IQAC Coordinator works in close collaboration with the RDC to monitor quality benchmarks, NAAC requirements, and research KPIs.

The RDC itself is composed of seven members currently, including the Assistant Director (Research) who serves as the coordinating officer of the Cell. The members consist of nominated faculty representatives from different Schools, one member from IQAC, and one administrative representative. Each member is assigned responsibility for overseeing specific committees under the RDC—such as the Ethics Committee, Research Promotion and Incentive Committee, Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Committee, Funding and Collaboration Committee, and Research Data and Documentation Committee. This distributed responsibility ensures efficient management of ethical approvals, policy development, funding processes,

research integrity, and laboratory practices. The organizational structure allows for a collaborative and transparent system that strengthens governance, supports interdisciplinary research, and enhances the overall research ecosystem of Sikkim Alpine University in alignment with UGC's 2022 guidelines for R&D Cells.



3.2 Roles & Responsibilities of the R&D Cell

The main responsibilities of the RDC include formulating and updating research policies; promoting high-quality research; facilitating funding applications; coordinating ethical approvals; ensuring academic integrity; organizing capacity-building programs; monitoring research progress; maintaining research databases; and overseeing compliance with UGC regulations. The RDC also supports faculty and students through grant facilitation, guidance on publications, collaboration development, intellectual property filing, and documentation for NAAC/NIRF. It acts as the central hub for all research-related communication, governance, and institutional reporting.

3.3 Research Advisory Board (RAB)

The Research Advisory Board is a high-level consultative body comprising senior internal faculty members and external experts from academia, research institutions, industries, and government organizations. The RAB provides strategic direction for the University's research priorities, evaluates major research proposals, reviews institutional progress, and recommends improvements in research quality and policy. It ensures that the research activities of the University are aligned with national priorities, global trends, and regional needs, particularly in the context of the Eastern Himalayan environment.

3.4 School/Departmental Research Committees (DRC)

Each School or Department establishes a Departmental Research Committee to monitor and support research activities at the departmental level. The DRC is responsible for reviewing student and faculty research proposals, verifying plagiarism compliance, coordinating ethical approvals, organizing departmental seminars, monitoring ongoing research projects, and submitting periodic reports to the RDC. These committees provide localized guidance, ensuring research quality, discipline-specific benchmarking, and effective communication between departments and the central R&D Cell.

3.5 Interdisciplinary Research Clusters

In line with NEP 2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary education and research, the University promotes the formation of Interdisciplinary Research Clusters. These clusters bring together faculty and scholars from different disciplines to collaborate on common research themes such as biodiversity and conservation, Himalayan studies, sustainable development, climate change, language processing, biotechnology, and nonlinear dynamics. These clusters facilitate cross-disciplinary innovation, resource sharing, joint publications, collaborative projects, and greater societal impact through holistic problem-solving approaches.

3.6 Research Governance for Humanities, Social Sciences & Indigenous Knowledge Research

Sikkim Alpine University recognizes that research in Humanities, Social Sciences, Linguistics, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems follows methodologies, ethical frameworks, and evaluation standards that differ significantly from laboratory-based or experimental sciences.

To ensure equitable governance across all academic disciplines, the University shall adopt a discipline-specific research governance model that respects the unique nature of qualitative, ethnographic, archival, linguistic, literary, and cultural research.

The Research & Development Cell (RDC) shall ensure that School/Departmental Research Committees (DRCs) in these disciplines follow appropriate guidelines that align with national and international standards in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Research in departments such as Lepcha, Limboo, local language studies, literature, folklore, social anthropology, education, philosophy, and cultural studies shall use accepted scholarly methods including fieldwork, interviews, narrative documentation, textual analysis, translation studies, and archival research.

The governance structure for these disciplines shall include the following principles:

- a) **Discipline-Specific Methodologies:** Research shall be evaluated according to established methods relevant to Humanities and Social Sciences, such as ethnographic inquiry, linguistic documentation, hermeneutic analysis, oral history collection, cultural interpretation, literary criticism, and qualitative research frameworks.
- b) **Non-Applicability of Laboratory Standards:** Research in these departments is not required to follow laboratory, biosafety, GLP, or scientific instrumentation standards used in natural sciences.
- c) **Ethical Frameworks Based on Cultural Sensitivity:** Ethical oversight shall focus on informed consent, cultural respect, community engagement, protection of indigenous rights, confidentiality in interviews, and responsible documentation of oral and traditional knowledge.
- d) **DRC Responsibilities:** Departmental Research Committees shall evaluate research proposals based on disciplinary norms, review methodological soundness, examine ethical sensitivity, validate originality through expert review rather than technological similarity detection (where applicable), and guide students in responsible scholarship.
- e) **Indigenous Knowledge Considerations:** Research involving Lepcha, Limboo, tribal folklore, traditional ecological knowledge, rituals, or cultural heritage must follow

principles of community collaboration, respectful representation, and protection of intangible cultural resources.

The University affirms that qualitative, cultural, and Humanities-based research contributes equally to academic excellence, community development, and the preservation of Sikkim’s cultural and linguistic heritage. This governance framework ensures that all disciplines — whether scientific, linguistic, cultural, or social — are appropriately supported and aligned with the University’s broader vision for inclusive and multidisciplinary research.

4. RESEARCH PROMOTION POLICY (LINKED TO CAS & FACULTY APPRAISAL)

Sikkim Alpine University is committed to fostering a dynamic research culture that encourages faculty to pursue high-quality scholarly work, interdisciplinary projects, innovation-driven research, and impactful publications. The Research Promotion Policy aims to strengthen institutional research output by providing structured incentives, funding opportunities, and professional support aligned with UGC's Career Advancement Scheme (CAS), Academic Performance Indicators (API), and national research priorities. This policy ensures that faculty contributions to research are recognized, rewarded, and integrated into annual appraisal and promotion processes.

4.1 Research Incentives

The University shall provide research incentives to encourage faculty engagement in high-quality research and innovation. These incentives may include financial rewards, certificates of recognition, reduced teaching load (where applicable), and priority consideration for internal grants. Faculty who publishes in reputed journals indexed in **Scopus, Web of Science, or UGC-CARE**, or who successfully file patents, secure major grants, or produce high-impact books/chapters, will be eligible for incentive benefits. Incentives will be awarded based on transparent criteria, annually reviewed by the R&D Cell, and approved by the Academic Council. Special encouragement will be given to research addressing regional issues, Himalayan studies, sustainability, indigenous knowledge, and national priorities.

4.2 Points for API/CAS (Career Advancement Scheme)

All research activities undertaken by faculty members will contribute to API scores as per the latest UGC CAS Regulations. Eligible research contributions include:

- a) Research publications in peer-reviewed and indexed journals
- b) Patents filed/granted and copyright registrations
- c) Authorship of books, chapters, or monographs with ISBN
- d) Completed funded research projects
- e) Conference presentations (national/international)
- f) Membership in editorial boards or reviewer panels
- g) Research supervision (Ph.D./M.Phil. /PG dissertations)

The University shall maintain a **Research API Verification Committee** under the RDC to authenticate claims, verify publication quality, and prevent predatory publishing. The CAS process will remain transparent, merit-based, and fully compliant with UGC norms.

4.3 Seed Grant Policy

To promote early-stage research, the University will offer **Seed Grants** to faculty members for pilot studies, preliminary data collection, and concept development. Seed grants will be awarded on a competitive basis following review by the R&D Cell and approval by the Research Advisory Board. Priority will be given to interdisciplinary proposals, innovative research ideas, and projects with potential for external funding. Grant recipients must submit progress reports and comply with expenditure norms. Seed grants aim to build research capacity, support emerging faculty researchers, and enhance the University's visibility in national research platforms.

4.4 Travel Grant & Publication Support

The University will support faculty participation in **national and international conferences**, workshops, training programs, and research exchanges. Travel grants may cover registration fees, travel, accommodation (as per norms), or partial funding depending on budget availability. Faculty presenting papers or receiving invitations as resource persons will receive priority consideration.

Publication support will include:

- a) Reimbursement of publication charges for high-quality journals (Scopus/WoS)
- b) Support for manuscript editing, proof-reading, or language polishing
- c) Assistance for open-access publication fees under approved guidelines

This support aims to improve visibility, enhance collaborative opportunities, and strengthen the research profile of the institution.

4.5 Faculty Start-Up / Innovation Support

In alignment with **Aatma Nirbhar Bharat** and NEP 2020's thrust on innovation, the University will promote faculty-led start-ups and innovation ventures. Support may include:

- a) Access to incubation facilities
- b) Mentorship from industry/research experts
- c) Facilitation for patent filing and IPR protection
- d) Financial assistance through innovation grants
- e) Industry collaboration for prototype development

Faculty-driven innovations addressing local challenges, sustainability, Himalayan ecosystem issues, or technological applications will be given priority.

4.6 Policy for Attracting External Funding (DST/DBT/ICSSR/CSR etc.)

The University encourages faculty to apply for external research funding from national organizations such as **DST, DBT, ICMR, ICSSR, UGC, SERB, MoEFCC**, and other government or non-government agencies. The R&D Cell will:

- a) Circulate funding announcements regularly
- b) Provide guidance in proposal writing and budgeting
- c) Facilitate administrative approvals and documentation
- d) Support project management, accounting, and reporting
- e) Maintain a database of ongoing and completed funded projects

In addition, the University will engage with industries, NGOs, and corporate agencies to secure **CSR-funded research**, consultancy projects, and collaborative opportunities. External funding shall be recognized as an important criterion in faculty appraisal and departmental performance evaluation.

5. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, ETHICS & PLAGIARISM REGULATIONS

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a comprehensive framework to uphold academic integrity, ensure ethical research conduct, and prevent plagiarism across all academic and research activities. In accordance with UGC 2018 Plagiarism Regulations and NEP 2020 directives, the University will enforce strict standards of honesty, originality, and transparency. The Research & Development Cell (RDC), in collaboration with the Academic Integrity Panel (AIP) and Departmental Academic Integrity Panels (DAIP), will oversee implementation, monitoring, and compliance of all academic integrity regulations.

5.1 Ethical Conduct in Research

The University shall establish and enforce clear standards for ethical conduct in research. All researchers—faculty, scholars, and students—must adhere to ethical principles including honesty in data collection, accuracy in reporting, respect for human and animal subjects, environmental responsibility, and transparency in methodology. The University will institutionalize training programs, ethical guidelines, and approval mechanisms to ensure responsible research conduct aligned with international best practices.

5.2 Policy on Academic Integrity

Sikkim Alpine University shall adopt a strict academic integrity policy to govern all academic and research activities. The University will establish mechanisms to prevent academic misconduct such as plagiarism, data manipulation, fabrication, falsification, unauthorized authorship, or misrepresentation. Academic integrity training, awareness programs, and guidelines on proper citation and referencing will be made mandatory. Any violation shall be investigated through established panels and dealt with according to University and UGC regulations.

5.3 Plagiarism Policy

The University shall establish a detailed plagiarism policy consistent with UGC 2018 Regulations. All academic documents—including research papers, theses, dissertations, proposals, reports, and publications—must undergo mandatory similarity checks using University-approved plagiarism detection software. The University will define permissible

similarity thresholds and implement graded penalties for plagiarism offences. Supervisors must ensure originality in student submissions before forwarding them for evaluation or publication.

5.4 Formation of the Academic Integrity Panel (AIP)

To ensure effective implementation of academic integrity regulations, the University shall establish an **Academic Integrity Panel (AIP)**. This panel will be responsible for reviewing plagiarism reports, investigating academic misconduct, conducting hearings, and recommending penalties. The AIP will function as the central authority for all institutional academic integrity matters. Its composition, powers, and responsibilities shall follow UGC-prescribed norms.

5.4.1 Establishment of Departmental Academic Integrity Panels (DAIP)

Each Department/School shall establish a **Departmental Academic Integrity Panel (DAIP)** to conduct preliminary screening of all research submissions and suspected plagiarism cases. DAIPs shall review similarity reports, verify referencing accuracy, provide initial recommendations, and forward major cases to the Institutional AIP. DAIPs will also organize departmental workshops on academic writing and citation ethics.

5.4.2 Establishment of the Institutional Academic Integrity Panel (IAIP)

The University shall constitute an **Institutional Academic Integrity Panel (IAIP)** as the apex body for academic integrity matters. The IAIP will handle cases referred by DAIPs or reported directly to the University. It shall conduct detailed investigations, determine levels of plagiarism, recommend penalties as per UGC's graded regulations, and maintain records of all decisions. The IAIP shall include senior faculty members, an external expert, and an IQAC representative.

5.5 Compliance with UGC 2018 Plagiarism Regulations

Sikkim Alpine University shall formally adopt and enforce the **UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018**. All defined categories of plagiarism, similarity thresholds, penalties, and appeal mechanisms shall be implemented in full. The University will periodically update its internal regulations to remain compliant with any amendments issued by the UGC. Training on plagiarism prevention and academic ethics shall be mandatory for all faculty and students.

5.6 Mandatory Plagiarism Checks for Theses, Papers & Proposals

“The University recognizes that research in Humanities, Linguistics, Indigenous Languages (Lepcha, Limboo), and Cultural Studies requires methodological and evaluative frameworks different from laboratory or experimental sciences. Therefore, plagiarism detection software may not be applicable or mandatory for such departments. Instead, originality and authenticity will be assessed through expert review, field documentation, linguistic validation, cultural consultation, and supervisor certification. The University shall adopt discipline-specific research evaluation standards in accordance with national guidelines and indigenous ethical principles.”

The University shall institutionalize mandatory plagiarism screening for all academic and research submissions. No thesis, dissertation, research proposal, project report, manuscript, or conference paper shall be submitted, evaluated, or forwarded for publication without a valid plagiarism clearance certificate issued by the DAIP or IAIP. Supervisors shall certify originality before approval, and all similarity reports will be archived for record-keeping and future verification. This mechanism ensures originality, academic honesty, and global standards of scholarly integrity.

5.7 Plagiarism & Originality Standards for Indigenous Languages and Humanities Research

Sikkim Alpine University recognizes that research in Indigenous Languages (such as Lepcha and Limboo), Humanities, Social Sciences, Linguistics, Cultural Studies, Folklore, and allied disciplines follows distinct scholarly traditions that differ from the norms of scientific and technical research. Given the nature of oral traditions, translations, narrative histories, cultural documentation, and archival research, the use of standard plagiarism detection software may not be fully applicable or reliable for such fields. To ensure fairness, authenticity, and respect for indigenous knowledge systems, the University shall adopt specialized plagiarism and originality evaluation procedures for these departments.

The following standards shall govern plagiarism assessment and originality verification for Humanities and Indigenous Knowledge research:

- a) Optional Use of Similarity Detection Software:** For research conducted in indigenous languages, oral literature, folk narratives, cultural documentation, translations, or

linguistic preservation, the use of plagiarism detection software shall not be mandatory. If required, similarity checks may be limited to English commentary, analysis sections, or translated portions rather than the primary indigenous-language content.

- b) **Expert-Based Originality Evaluation:** Originality of research in these disciplines shall be assessed through expert review by qualified faculty, cultural scholars, senior linguists, or specialists in traditional knowledge systems. Evaluators shall consider the authenticity of fieldwork, accuracy of language transcription, fidelity in translation, and adherence to cultural context rather than numerical similarity scores.
- c) **Verification of Oral and Field-Based Data:** Since indigenous knowledge research often relies on oral histories, community narratives, interviews, folklore recitations, and cultural performances, students and researchers must maintain supporting documentation such as field notes, interview transcripts, audio/video recordings, participant consent forms, and observational logs. Supervisors shall verify the authenticity of such data as evidence of originality.
- d) **Translation and Comparative Originality Standards:** Research involving translations (e.g., from Lepcha or Limboo into English) shall be evaluated based on comparative originality, interpretative clarity, and scholarly rigor in rendering the text, rather than similarity detected by software. Translations may naturally resemble source content and therefore cannot be assessed through machine-based plagiarism tools.
- e) **Respect for Cultural Intellectual Property:** All researchers must respect the cultural ownership, sacred value, and community rights attached to indigenous knowledge, rituals, oral traditions, and folklore. Content belonging to community heritage must not be misrepresented, misappropriated, or presented without proper contextual acknowledgment.
- f) **Supervisor and DRC Certification:** For dissertation or thesis submissions from Humanities and Indigenous Language departments, originality certificates issued by the supervisor and vetted by the Departmental Research Committee (DRC) shall be considered valid evidence of non-plagiarism. This certificate replaces software-generated similarity reports where applicable.

Through this provision, the University ensures that research in indigenous and cultural disciplines is evaluated through appropriate, sensitive, and academically rigorous methods that honor the unique nature of qualitative scholarship. This framework protects the integrity of traditional knowledge systems and promotes fair, discipline-specific evaluation across all departments.

6. INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEES

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a strong institutional framework for ethical oversight to ensure that all research activities involving human participants, animals, biological materials, environmental interventions, or field-based interactions adhere to the highest ethical, legal, and professional standards. The University recognizes ethical review as an essential component of responsible research conduct and shall operationalize various ethics committees in alignment with national guidelines such as ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research), CPCSEA (Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals), DBT Biosafety Rules, and global best practices.

6.1 Human Ethics Committee (HEC)

The University shall establish a **Human Ethics Committee (HEC)** to review and oversee all research projects involving human participants, personal data, surveys, interviews, psychological studies, or community-based interactions. The HEC will evaluate research proposals for potential risks, confidentiality safeguards, informed consent processes, data protection mechanisms, and participant welfare. All researchers must obtain HEC approval prior to initiating any study involving human subjects. The HEC shall operate according to ICMR National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research (2017) and subsequent amendments.

6.2 Animal Ethics Committee (IAEC)

The University shall establish an **Institutional Animal Ethics Committee (IAEC)** in accordance with CPCSEA guidelines for overseeing research involving laboratory and field animals. The IAEC will review proposals to ensure humane treatment, ethical experimental design, appropriate use of anesthetics/analgesics, and minimization of distress or pain. No animal-based research shall commence without IAEC approval. The committee shall maintain records of animal housing, care standards, procurement sources, and periodic compliance inspections as mandated by national regulations.

6.3 Bio-safety Committee

To ensure safety in research involving biological materials, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), pathogenic microbes, recombinant DNA, and hazardous laboratory substances, the

University shall establish a **Bio-safety Committee**. This committee will monitor biosafety protocols, laboratory containment facilities, waste disposal practices, and compliance with DBT (Department of Biotechnology) and national biosafety guidelines. It will conduct risk assessments, review biosafety training, and inspect laboratory infrastructure to ensure safe research practices.

6.4 Fieldwork Ethics & Environmental Impact Considerations

The University shall institute guidelines for **field-based research ethics**, particularly for studies involving biodiversity, ecology, natural habitats, indigenous knowledge systems, and community engagement. Researchers must follow environmental protection norms, obtain necessary permissions (Forest Department, Biodiversity Boards, Tribal Councils), ensure minimal ecological disturbance, and respect cultural sensitivities. Environmental impact considerations must be integrated into research design, with emphasis on sustainability and conservation of Himalayan ecosystems.

6.5 Ethical Approval Procedures

All research projects involving humans, animals, biological materials, or field-based interactions must undergo mandatory ethical review before commencement. The researcher shall submit a detailed proposal, informed consent forms (if applicable), data safety plans, and risk assessment documents to the appropriate committee (HEC/IAEC/Bio-safety). The committee shall review the submission, provide recommendations, and issue either approval, conditional approval, or rejection. Ethical clearance certificates must be obtained before data collection begins and attached to all progress reports, thesis submissions, and publications.

6.6 Documentation & Review Cycles

Each ethics committee shall maintain comprehensive documentation including meeting minutes, proposal review reports, approval certificates, renewal forms, adverse event reports, and compliance audits. Ethical approvals shall have a defined validity period, typically one year, after which renewal is required. Annual reviews of ongoing projects will be conducted to ensure continued compliance with ethical standards. Committees must submit annual reports to the RDC and IQAC summarizing approved projects, compliance records, and any ethical concerns. All documentation shall be securely archived by the University for audit and regulatory purposes.

7. GOOD LABORATORY PRACTICES (GLP)

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish and implement Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) to ensure that all laboratory-based research and practical activities are conducted with the highest standards of safety, accuracy, reliability, and environmental responsibility. GLP guidelines shall apply to all laboratories across Schools and Departments and will be monitored by the R&D Cell in collaboration with Laboratory In-Charges, Safety Officers, and Institutional Ethics/Biosafety Committees. These practices aim to maintain laboratory integrity, support high-quality research outcomes, and ensure regulatory compliance in accordance with national and international standards.

7.1 Laboratory Safety Guidelines

The University shall establish comprehensive laboratory safety guidelines to protect students, faculty, research scholars, and technical staff. All individuals entering the laboratory must follow mandatory safety protocols including proper attire (PPE), awareness of emergency procedures, and adherence to safety signage. Laboratories shall be equipped with first-aid kits, fire extinguishers, eyewash stations, and emergency exits. Periodic safety training programs, mock drills, and hazard identification exercises will be conducted to promote a culture of safety and preparedness. Non-compliance with safety rules may result in restricted access to laboratory facilities.

7.2 Equipment Handling & Maintenance Policy

The University shall implement a strict policy for proper handling, operation, and maintenance of laboratory equipment. Only trained personnel shall operate sensitive or hazardous instruments. Equipment manuals, SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), and calibration logs must be maintained and displayed prominently. Regular servicing and preventive maintenance schedules shall be established to ensure reliability and avoid equipment failure. Damaged or malfunctioning equipment must be reported immediately, tagged as “Out of Service,” and repaired promptly. The University will maintain an asset register for all laboratory equipment under each Department.

7.3 Chemical & Biological Safety Protocols

To ensure safe handling of chemicals, biological materials, and hazardous substances, the University shall enforce strict chemical and biological safety protocols. All chemical containers must be properly labeled with hazard symbols, expiry dates, and safety instructions. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) must be readily accessible. Storage of flammable, corrosive, toxic, or reactive chemicals must comply with safety regulations. For biological laboratories, biosafety cabinets, sterilization equipment, and isolation protocols shall be used appropriately. Researchers must follow DBT biosafety guidelines for handling microorganisms, GMOs, recombinant DNA, or pathogenic materials.

7.4 Waste Management & Sustainability Practices

The University shall establish an environmentally responsible waste management system in all laboratories. Chemical waste, biological waste, sharps, glassware, and general waste shall be segregated, collected, treated, and disposed of according to statutory rules. Hazardous waste disposal must follow CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) norms. Departments shall also adopt sustainability practices such as chemical recycling where possible, minimizing single-use plastics, optimizing energy use, and encouraging green laboratory practices. Awareness sessions on eco-friendly lab operations will be conducted regularly.

7.5 Lab Record-Keeping & Data Management

Accurate and detailed record-keeping is essential for research integrity and reproducibility. Each laboratory shall maintain logbooks for equipment usage, experimental data, sample tracking, inventory records, maintenance logs, and biosafety documentation. Digital data must be stored securely with regular backups and controlled access. Raw data, analysis files, and laboratory notebooks shall be preserved for a minimum duration as specified by the University's data retention policy. Researchers must ensure transparency, traceability, and accountability in all laboratory documentation.

7.6 Access Control & Resource Sharing

The University shall implement regulated access control to laboratory facilities to ensure safety, security, and responsible usage. Entry to specialized laboratories will require authorization from the Laboratory In-Charge or Department Head. Visitors, interns, and student groups must

be accompanied by authorized personnel. The University encourages resource sharing across departments to optimize the use of advanced equipment and promote interdisciplinary research. A centralized equipment booking system may be implemented to ensure fair access and prevent misuse or overuse of laboratory resources.

8. RESEARCH QUALITY ASSURANCE & BENCHMARKING

Sikkim Alpine University is committed to establishing a robust system of research quality assurance and institutional benchmarking that aligns with national accreditation frameworks, global academic rankings, and best practices in higher education. The Research & Development Cell (RDC), in collaboration with the IQAC, shall ensure that all research activities meet the required standards of excellence, originality, ethical conduct, and societal relevance. This section outlines the mechanisms through which the University shall monitor, evaluate, benchmark, and enhance the quality of its research output.

8.1 NAAC Criterion 3 Alignment

The University shall align all research processes, documentation, and outcomes with **NAAC Criterion 3: Research, Innovations, and Extension**. The RDC and IQAC will jointly monitor key metrics including research publications, funded projects, collaborations, patents, consultancies, and institutional innovation practices. Departments must maintain updated records of research engagement, extension activities, and capacity-building programs to support NAAC assessments. Annual research reports shall be prepared to provide NAAC-ready evidence and ensure continuous quality enhancement. The University will adopt NAAC's quality matrices as internal benchmarks for assessing departmental and faculty performance.

8.2 NIRF Research and Professional Practice Indicators

To strengthen institutional visibility and national ranking performance, the University shall align its research initiatives with **NIRF's Research and Professional Practice (RP) indicators**, which include:

- a) Research publications in reputed journals
- b) Citations and h-index
- c) Sponsored research and consultancy
- d) Patents filed, published, or granted
- e) Collaborative research outputs

The RDC shall create an internal monitoring system to track these parameters annually. Each department will set NIRF-aligned targets to improve research productivity and impact. The

University shall also encourage high-quality publications, externally funded projects, and industry engagement to enhance NIRF ranking scores.

8.3 Research KPIs for Departments & Faculty

The University shall establish **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to monitor research output at both departmental and individual faculty levels. These KPIs may include:

- a) Number of research publications per year
- b) Quality of publications (indexed journals)
- c) Research citations and h-index
- d) Patents filed/granted
- e) Research funding secured
- f) Ph.D. supervision and completions
- g) Conference presentations and invited talks
- h) Consultancy projects
- i) Collaboration outputs (MoUs, joint publications)

These KPIs will guide faculty appraisal, departmental reviews, CAS (Career Advancement Scheme) processes, and institutional planning. KPI monitoring shall be overseen by the RDC and verified by IQAC for accuracy.

8.4 Publication Quality Standards (Scopus/WoS/UGC CARE)

The University shall establish strict publication quality standards to ensure that research output meets global academic benchmarks. Faculty and scholars shall be encouraged to publish in **Scopus, Web of Science, SCI/SCIE, Scimago, or UGC CARE-listed journals**. Publications in predatory or unrecognized journals will not be considered for appraisal, incentives, or CAS promotions. The RDC shall maintain a periodically updated list of credible journals and conduct workshops on identifying quality venues for publication. The University will promote ethical publishing practices, discourage duplicate submissions, and ensure compliance with international standards of academic integrity.

8.5 Consultancy & Industrial Collaboration Guidelines

To foster applied research, innovation, and industry engagement, the University shall develop guidelines for consultancy services and industrial collaborations. Faculty may undertake consultancy projects with prior approval from the University, and revenue-sharing mechanisms shall follow institutional policy. The RDC shall facilitate MoUs with industries, research institutes, government agencies, and NGOs to promote collaborative research, internships, joint publications, and technology transfer. Industrial collaborations will also support start-up activities, innovation challenges, and skill development initiatives in alignment with Aatma Nirbhar Bharat and NEP 2020.

9. SWOC ANALYSIS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

The SWOC analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the internal and external factors impacting the research ecosystem of Sikkim Alpine University. This reflective assessment helps the University understand its current position, identify areas for improvement, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and prepare for potential challenges. The SWOC analysis shall be reviewed and updated **every three years** by the IQAC in collaboration with the R&D Cell to ensure alignment with institutional growth, national priorities, and global academic trends.

9.1 Strengths

- a) **Emerging Multidisciplinary Environment:** The University offers diverse academic programs across science, humanities, and applied fields, enabling interdisciplinary research.
- b) **Location Advantage:** Situated in the biodiverse Eastern Himalayan region, the University has access to rich natural ecosystems, indigenous knowledge systems, and unique research opportunities.
- c) **Young and Flexible Institution:** As a recently established university, SAU has the flexibility to adopt innovative policies, modern research frameworks, and NEP 2020-aligned practices without institutional rigidity.
- d) **Motivated Faculty and Research Aspirations:** A growing team of faculty members with strong academic backgrounds and willingness to engage in meaningful research.
- e) **Supportive Leadership:** The University administration shows strong commitment to building research infrastructure, forming collaborations, and developing a research-driven culture.
- f) **Collaborative Potential:** Proximity to government bodies, NGOs, and industries operating in the North-East supports research partnerships.

9.2 Weaknesses

- a) **Limited Research Infrastructure:** As a young institution, laboratory facilities, advanced equipment, and specialized research centers are still in development.

- b) Low External Funding at Present:** Limited track record in securing major grants (DST, DBT, ICSSR, etc.) compared to older institutions.
- c) Research Culture Still Evolving:** Faculty and students require more training in research methodology, writing, grant applications, and publication ethics.
- d) Insufficient High-Impact Publications:** Limited number of Scopus/WoS-indexed publications, patents, and consultancy projects currently being produced.
- e) Dependence on External Expertise:** Need for more collaborations and external experts for specialized research areas and Ph.D. supervision.
- f) Limited Doctoral Output:** Research scholar enrollment has not yet started, affecting total research output.

9.3 Opportunities

- a) NEP 2020 Mandate:** Strong national push for research, innovation, start-ups, and multidisciplinary learning provides momentum for institutional growth.
- b) Aatma Nirbhar Bharat:** Funding schemes, innovation challenges, and start-up support programs create opportunities for entrepreneurship and applied research.
- c) Eastern Himalayan Research Potential:** Biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, sustainable agriculture, cultural studies, and indigenous knowledge offer rich research domains.
- d) Government and CSR Funding:** Opportunities to secure research grants from DST, DBT, ICSSR, ICMR, MoEFCC, and CSR foundations.
- e) Industry Collaborations:** Scope for partnerships in biotechnology, environmental consulting, digital technology, tourism, herbal medicine, and climate resilience projects.
- f) Student Research Engagement:** Increasing student enrollment provides opportunity to strengthen UG/PG research and dissertation-based projects.

- g) Scope for Establishing Centers of Excellence:** Such centers can focus on Himalayan Studies, Climate Change, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Biotechnology, etc.

9.4 Challenges

- a) Resource Constraints:** Limited infrastructure and funding may affect immediate expansion of research facilities.
- b) High Competition:** Older universities and national institutes in the region already have established research ecosystems.
- c) Compliance & Regulatory Demands:** Maintaining strict adherence to UGC, NAAC, NIRF, CPCSEA, and biosafety norms requires sustained administrative effort.
- d) Geographical & Climatic Constraints:** Difficult terrain and seasonal challenges can affect field research, outreach, and collaborations.
- e) Brain Drain:** Attracting and retaining highly qualified researchers may be challenging due to competition from larger institutions.
- f) Publication Pressure:** Meeting global publication standards can be challenging for early-career researchers with limited exposure.
- g) Rapidly Evolving Technology:** Continuous upgrading of research equipment, digital tools, and technical training is required.

10. RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT & REPOSITORY POLICY

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a comprehensive Research Data Management and Repository Policy to ensure that all research data generated within the University is handled responsibly, stored securely, and preserved for long-term academic use. Proper data management enhances research transparency, reproducibility, academic credibility, and compliance with institutional, national, and international standards. This policy shall be implemented and monitored by the R&D Cell in coordination with IQAC, the Library Department, and the respective Schools/Departments.

10.1 Data Storage, Back-Up & Archiving

The University shall institutionalize standardized procedures for the secure storage, back-up, and archiving of research data. All faculty, scholars, and researchers must maintain digital and/or physical copies of raw data, processed data, analytical results, and related documentation. Data must be stored in University-approved platforms such as secure servers, cloud-based institutional storage, or departmental repositories. Regular back-ups shall be mandated to prevent data loss. Researchers must archive their data for a minimum period specified by the University (typically 5–7 years) to ensure accessibility for verification, audits, and future research. Sensitive data involving human subjects must be stored with strict confidentiality protocols consistent with ethical guidelines.

10.2 INFLIBNET Shodhganga/Shodhgangotri Compliance

The University shall comply with the **INFLIBNET Centre's Shodhganga and Shodhgangotri regulations** for the deposit of theses, dissertations, and research synopses. All final Ph.D. theses and M.Phil./PG dissertations (where applicable) must be submitted to the University Library in digital format along with plagiarism clearance certificates and copyright declarations. The University shall facilitate the electronic submission of approved theses to INFLIBNET's Shodhganga repository, ensuring open access to scholarly work and contributing to the national academic database. Pre-registration research synopses shall be submitted to Shodhgangotri as per UGC norms. Depositing research outputs in these repositories is mandatory for degree completion and compliance verification.

10.3 Research Documentation Standards (Lab Books, Digital Logs)

The University shall enforce standardized documentation practices to ensure accuracy, traceability, and reproducibility of research. All laboratories must maintain bound laboratory notebooks, experiment logbooks, equipment usage logs, calibration records, and data sheets. Researchers shall record observations, methodologies, dates, and signatures in accordance with GLP norms. Digital logs must be timestamped, securely stored, and backed up as per University guidelines. Proper documentation is essential for thesis submission, publication, ethical review, patent filing, and audit processes. Fabrication, tampering, or destruction of research records will be considered a serious violation of academic integrity and subject to disciplinary action.

11. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR) POLICY

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a comprehensive Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy to promote innovation, protect creative and scientific outputs, and facilitate technology transfer and commercialization. This policy aims to create an enabling environment where faculty, researchers, and students are encouraged to develop novel ideas, inventions, and creative works while ensuring that intellectual contributions are legally protected and ethically managed. The IPR Policy shall be governed by the Research & Development Cell in collaboration with legal advisors, innovation cells, and the University administration.

11.1 Patent Filing Support

The University shall provide structured support for filing and processing patents arising from research conducted within its academic community. This includes:

- a) Assistance with drafting specifications, claims, and patent documentation.
- b) Support for prior art search and patentability assessment.
- c) Financial assistance or partial reimbursement for patent filing fees (national or international).
- d) Facilitation of coordination with patent attorneys, IP consultants, or innovation partners.
- e) Awareness programs and workshops on patent drafting, intellectual property law, and innovation cycles.

All patentable work must be disclosed to the University's IPR Cell before public dissemination. The University reserves the right to be a joint applicant if institutional resources, facilities, or funding were used.

11.2 Copyrights, Designs, Trademarks

The University shall support protection of intellectual outputs through copyrights, designs, and trademark registration in accordance with Indian IP laws. The following shall be eligible for protection:

- a) Books, manuals, reports, dissertations, and research publications
- b) Software, algorithms, mobile applications, and digital content
- c) Artistic works, designs, logos, and creative materials
- d) Educational modules, courseware, and digital learning tools

- e) Research instruments, prototypes, and innovative models

Creators shall retain moral rights over their work, while ownership and commercialization rights shall follow University IPR guidelines when institutional resources were used.

11.3 Royalty Sharing Mechanism

The University shall establish a transparent and equitable royalty-sharing mechanism to ensure that inventors receive fair recognition and financial benefits from commercialization. The standard model may include:

- a) **50% share to the inventor(s)**
- b) **50% share to the University**

The University's share shall be used to strengthen research facilities, innovation labs, and the IPR Cell.

Alternative sharing ratios may apply based on funding agency rules, external collaborations, CSR projects, or special agreements.

Royalty distribution will be overseen by the RDC and approved by the Registrar and Finance Committee.

11.4 Start-Up & Technology Transfer Policy

To promote innovation-based entrepreneurship in alignment with NEP 2020 and Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, the University shall develop a structured **Start-Up and Technology Transfer Policy**. This shall include:

- a) Support for faculty and student start-ups through incubation facilities.
- b) Access to laboratory infrastructure, mentorship, and industry linkages.
- c) Assistance in prototype development, validation, and field testing.
- d) Guidance for technology licensing, MoUs, and commercialization agreements.
- e) Facilitation of collaboration with industry, research councils, incubators, and government innovation missions (Startup India, AIM, DST-NIDHI, etc.)

The University may take an equity share in start-ups incubated with institutional support, following national guidelines. A Technology Transfer Committee will oversee licensing, agreements, valuation, and compliance.

12. COLLABORATIONS, MoUs & OUTREACH

Sikkim Alpine University recognizes that meaningful research and innovation flourish through collaborative engagement, interdisciplinary partnerships, and active outreach. The University shall establish structured mechanisms to promote collaborations with national and international institutions, industries, government bodies, NGOs, and local communities. These partnerships will enhance knowledge exchange, capacity building, resource sharing, and societal impact. All collaborations shall follow approved University procedures and must be formalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), agreements, or partnership frameworks reviewed by the R&D Cell and endorsed by the appropriate authorities.

12.1 National and International Collaborations

The University shall actively pursue collaborations with reputable national and international institutions to promote joint research projects, faculty exchanges, student mobility, co-publications, and capacity-building initiatives. Priority will be given to institutions with strong research capabilities, globally indexed publications, and proven collaborative networks. MoUs shall clearly outline objectives, roles, intellectual property rights, financial commitments, and expected outcomes. These collaborations aim to elevate the University's academic standing, global visibility, and contribution to international research communities.

12.2 Industry Partnerships

Recognizing the importance of industry-academia engagement, the University shall foster partnerships with industries, startups, and corporate bodies to promote applied research, innovation, consultancy, and skill development. Industry collaborations may include:

- a) Joint research and development (R&D) projects
- b) Internships and field training for students
- c) Technology transfer and innovation support
- d) Sponsorship of research labs or equipment
- e) Curriculum development aligned with industry needs
- f) CSR-funded research initiatives

The R&D Cell shall coordinate these partnerships to ensure that they align with institutional goals and benefit both faculty and students.

12.3 Government & NGO Linkages

The University shall strengthen linkages with government departments, public research agencies, statutory bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support research aligned with public policy, environmental sustainability, education, public health, biodiversity, and social development. Collaborations with agencies such as DST, DBT, ICSSR, MoEFCC, NABARD, State Biodiversity Boards, Tribal Councils, and community organizations will be encouraged. NGO partnerships shall support community-based innovation, fieldwork, surveys, awareness programs, and knowledge dissemination.

12.4 Community-Based Participatory Research

Sikkim Alpine University shall promote **community-based participatory research (CBPR)** that involves local communities as co-creators of knowledge. This approach is particularly relevant for Sikkim and the Himalayan region, where indigenous knowledge, local ecological understanding, and community governance systems play a central role in sustainable development. Researchers shall ensure participatory decision-making, transparent communication, equitable benefit-sharing, and cultural sensitivity. CBPR outcomes may inform local policy, support livelihoods, and contribute to sustainable management of natural resources.

12.5 Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (NEP Focus)

In alignment with NEP 2020's emphasis on recognizing, preserving, and promoting indigenous knowledge systems, the University shall develop research programs that document and validate traditional knowledge related to biodiversity, herbal medicine, agriculture, folklore, socio-cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship. Collaborations with local communities, traditional practitioners, tribal councils, and cultural institutions will be encouraged. The University shall prioritize ethical documentation, proper attribution, and benefit-sharing while ensuring sensitivity to cultural rights and intellectual property issues. Research in this domain will contribute to preserving Sikkim's heritage and advancing sustainable local development.

12.5.1 Research Standards for Language, Culture & Indigenous Knowledge Departments

Sikkim Alpine University acknowledges that research in Indigenous Languages (such as Lepcha and Limboo), Cultural Studies, Linguistics, Folklore, Oral Traditions, and other

Humanities disciplines follows distinct methodological and ethical frameworks that differ significantly from laboratory-based or experimental sciences. To ensure that these disciplines are supported, respected, and evaluated appropriately, the University shall adopt specialized research standards tailored to their unique epistemological and cultural contexts.

The following principles shall guide research evaluation, supervision, and academic review within the Language, Culture, and Indigenous Knowledge Departments:

- a) **Recognition of Diverse Research Outputs:** The University recognizes oral literature, linguistic documentation, folklore collections, ethnographic narratives, cultural analyses, annotated translations, historical accounts, and community-based knowledge as legitimate and high-value scholarly contributions. Such outputs shall be treated on par with scientific publications and technical research outcomes.
- b) **Discipline-Specific Evaluation Methods:** Research in these domains shall be assessed using appropriate methodologies informed by anthropology, linguistics, literary criticism, cultural studies, historiography, semiotics, and qualitative research frameworks. Evaluation shall not rely on scientific experimental parameters but on scholarly rigor, interpretative depth, cultural accuracy, and analytical clarity.
- c) **Respect for Community Rights and Cultural Sensitivity:** Researchers must respect the cultural, spiritual, and intellectual rights of indigenous and local communities from whom knowledge may be documented. Special care must be taken to avoid cultural misappropriation, misrepresentation, or exploitation. Sensitive materials—such as sacred rituals, clan knowledge, or restricted folklore—must be handled with discretion and only documented with informed permission.
- d) **Ethics in Fieldwork and Oral Knowledge Collection:** Field-based research must include proper informed consent, transparency about research objectives, and—where appropriate—collaboration with community elders, practitioners, storytellers, or traditional custodians of knowledge. Community consultations must be documented, and due acknowledgment must be provided in all research outputs.
- e) **Proper Attribution and Documentation Standards:** All collected oral histories, narratives, songs, rituals, linguistic samples, or cultural materials must be properly attributed to their original sources, including individuals, clans, families, or

communities. Researchers must maintain detailed field notes, audio/video recordings, transcription documents, and consent forms as evidence of authenticity.

- f) Collaborative and Participatory Research Practices:** The University encourages participatory research approaches where local communities act as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive subjects. Shared authorship, community feedback, and equitable benefit-sharing are strongly recommended, particularly in studies involving cultural heritage, indigenous vocabulary, or traditional ecological knowledge.

Through these standards, Sikkim Alpine University ensures that research in Indigenous Languages, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Cultural Studies is evaluated with integrity, respect, cultural sensitivity, and academic rigor. This approach reinforces the University's commitment to preserving the heritage of Sikkim and the Eastern Himalayas while promoting scholarly excellence aligned with NEP 2020.

13. STUDENT RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT

Sikkim Alpine University is committed to nurturing a culture of research among students at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. In alignment with NEP 2020, the University shall create structured platforms that enable students to participate in high-quality research, innovation, and scholarly activities. The Research & Development Cell (RDC), in collaboration with Schools/Departments and Innovation Cells, shall implement policies that encourage inquiry-based learning, mentorship, and academic excellence among students.

13.1 UG/PG Research Policy

The University shall introduce and strengthen research components at the UG and PG levels to promote critical thinking, analytical abilities, and problem-solving skills. Undergraduate students shall be encouraged to undertake minor research projects, field studies, or experiential learning modules. Postgraduate students shall engage in advanced research work aligned with departmental strengths, contemporary societal needs, and faculty expertise. All UG/PG research must adhere to institutional ethics guidelines, plagiarism standards, and documentation norms.

13.2 Dissertation/Project Guidelines

The University shall establish clear guidelines for dissertations, project submissions, field reports, and research-based coursework at the PG level. These guidelines shall include:

- a) Formal proposal submission and approval process
- b) Mandatory ethics review where applicable
- c) Required plagiarism screening using approved software
- d) Formatting and documentation standards
- e) Supervisor responsibilities and mentoring timelines
- f) Evaluation criteria and viva-voce procedures

Departments must ensure that dissertation work is original, supervised effectively, and academically rigorous. Final copies must be archived in the departmental repository and submitted to the University library.

13.3 Research Clubs & Innovation Cells

To promote a vibrant research culture, the University shall facilitate the establishment of **Research Clubs, Discipline-Specific Forums, and Innovation Cells**. These student-led platforms will organize seminars, workshops, reading groups, hackathons, innovation challenges, and research discussions. Innovation Cells shall collaborate with industry, startups, and research institutes to expose students to emerging technologies and entrepreneurial opportunities. These platforms encourage peer learning, mentoring, and early exposure to research skills.

13.4 Student Research Fellowships

The University shall introduce institutional **Student Research Fellowships** to support promising undergraduate and postgraduate students who demonstrate exceptional research potential. These fellowships may include:

- a) Financial support for small-scale research projects
- b) Travel grants for conference presentations
- c) Assistance for research materials or fieldwork
- d) Recognition awards for outstanding student research

Efforts will be made to align these fellowships with national schemes such as INSPIRE, KVPY (legacy), ICSSR Studentships, and state-funded research scholarships.

13.5 Promoting Research Internships & Competitions

The University shall encourage students to participate in national and international research internships, summer schools, innovation contests, and academic competitions. The RDC and Placement/Training Cells shall support students in securing internships at reputed institutions, industries, environmental agencies, NGOs, and government research bodies. Participation in research competitions such as smart hackathons, project expos, innovation fairs, and startup challenges will be promoted to foster creativity, teamwork, and practical problem-solving skills.

14. INNOVATION & INCUBATION POLICY

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a dedicated Innovation & Incubation framework to promote creativity, entrepreneurship, and technology-enabled solutions among students, faculty, and researchers. This policy aims to create a nurturing ecosystem where innovative ideas can evolve into prototypes, pre-incubated concepts, and viable start-ups. The University will strengthen linkages with industries, government programs, and national innovation platforms to build an inclusive environment that supports entrepreneurial growth in alignment with NEP 2020 and Aatma Nirbhar Bharat.

14.1 Innovation Cell

The University shall establish an **Innovation Cell** responsible for promoting innovation-driven activities across all Schools and Departments. Its functions include:

- a) Conducting innovation workshops, hackathons, ideathons, boot camps, and design-thinking sessions.
- b) Identifying innovative ideas from students and faculty and supporting their development.
- c) Facilitating collaborations with industries, start-ups, and research institutes.
- d) Providing training in entrepreneurship, IP protection, pitching, and prototype development.
- e) Coordinating with national bodies like MIC (MoE Innovation Cell), Startup India, and Atal Innovation Mission.

The Innovation Cell shall work closely with the R&D Cell and Incubation Centre to channel promising ideas into pre-incubation and start-up pathways.

14.2 Pre-Incubation & Incubation Guidelines

The University shall create structured **Pre-Incubation and Incubation Programs** to support idea-to-product development. These guidelines shall include:

Pre-Incubation Support

- a) Access to University labs, tools, resources, and technical support.
- b) Mentoring from faculty experts and industry professionals.
- c) Guidance on prototype development, market research, and feasibility analysis.
- d) Short-term workspace for brainstorming and early-stage development.

Incubation Support

- a) Allocation of dedicated incubation space within the University.
- b) Access to advanced facilities, equipment, and specialized laboratories.
- c) Legal, financial, and business development support.
- d) Assistance in technology validation, field trials, and pilot testing.
- e) Networking opportunities with investors, industries, and innovation agencies.

Incubation entry shall be based on a transparent selection process overseen by the **Incubation & Innovation Committee (IIC)**.

14.3 Start-Up Support

To promote entrepreneurship and innovation-based ventures, the University shall offer structured support for faculty and student start-ups. This includes:

- a) Support for business registration, compliance, and intellectual property filing.
- b) Prototype funding, seed support, and access to state/national startup schemes.
- c) Priority access to incubation facilities and expert mentoring.
- d) Opportunities to participate in innovation fairs, expos, and pitch competitions.
- e) Guidance for accessing government programs such as:
 - i. Startup India
 - ii. Atal Innovation Mission
 - iii. NIDHI-PRAYAS, NIDHI-EIR
 - iv. State Startup Schemes
 - v. MSME Innovation Schemes

Faculty entrepreneurship will be encouraged while ensuring ethical guidelines and avoiding conflict of interest.

14.4 Funding & Mentorship Ecosystem

The University shall establish a strong funding and mentorship ecosystem to support innovators at all stages of development. This ecosystem will include:

- a) **Internal seed grants** for early-stage innovation and prototype development.
- b) **Access to external funding** sources such as DST, DBT, MSME, ICSSR, state innovation councils, CSR funds, and venture capital.

- c) **Mentorship panels** consisting of industry leaders, entrepreneurs, technical experts, financial advisors, and legal consultants.
- d) **Innovation Mentorship Network** connecting students with faculty innovators and alumni entrepreneurs.
- e) **Facilitation of business model development**, intellectual property guidance, and market linkage support.

The University shall periodically organize pitch days, investor meetings, and innovation showcases to connect innovators with funding and collaboration opportunities.

15. MONITORING, EVALUATION & REPORTING

Sikkim Alpine University shall institute a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess research performance, ensure compliance with institutional and statutory guidelines, and promote continuous improvement. The Research & Development Cell (RDC), in collaboration with IQAC, Schools/Departments, and statutory committees, shall be responsible for collecting data, evaluating progress, and preparing comprehensive reports that inform decision-making at the University level. This system ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment with national benchmarks such as NAAC, NIRF, and UGC research standards.

15.1 Annual R&D Report

The University shall publish an **Annual Research & Development Report** summarizing research activities and achievements across all Departments. This report shall include:

- a) Research publications and citations
- b) Funded projects (ongoing and completed)
- c) Patents filed/granted
- d) Consultancy and industry collaborations
- e) Research awards and recognitions
- f) Student research output
- g) Activities of innovation and incubation units
- h) Ethical and academic integrity compliance
- i) Departmental research statistics and KPIs

The Annual Report shall be presented to the Academic Council, IQAC, and University leadership, and shall serve as a key document during NAAC/NIRF assessments.

15.2 KPI Tracking System

The University shall establish a **Research Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Tracking System** to monitor performance at both the departmental and faculty levels. KPIs will include:

- a) Number and quality of research publications
- b) Citation metrics (h-index, i10-index, etc.)
- c) Research grants secured
- d) Patents and innovations

- e) Student research engagement
- f) Consultancy projects
- g) Academic integrity compliance

The RDC shall maintain a digital KPI dashboard to ensure timely data collection and accurate reporting. Departments shall submit quarterly updates to the RDC for review.

15.3 Internal & External Audits

To ensure objectivity and regulatory compliance, the University shall conduct both **internal and external audits** of its research ecosystem.

- a) **Internal audits** shall be conducted annually by the RDC and IQAC to assess adherence to research policies, ethical standards, documentation norms, financial utilization, and performance benchmarks.
- b) **External audits** may be conducted by invited experts, statutory bodies, or accreditation panels to validate the integrity, quality, and impact of research activities.

Audit findings shall be documented and used for corrective measures and policy refinement.

15.4 Departmental Research Reviews

Each department shall undergo a structured **Annual Departmental Research Review** coordinated by the RDC. These reviews shall evaluate:

- a) Research output and quality
- b) Ongoing projects and collaborations
- c) Compliance with ethics and plagiarism regulations
- d) UG/PG/Ph.D. research quality
- e) Departmental KPIs and progress toward targets
- f) Infrastructure utilization and laboratory practices

The outcomes of the review shall be reported to the Dean, IQAC, and RDC for institutional-level analysis and support planning.

15.5 Feedback & Continuous Improvement

The University shall establish a structured feedback mechanism to ensure continuous enhancement of research quality. Feedback will be obtained from:

- a) Faculty members

- b) Research scholars
- c) Students
- d) External collaborators
- e) Industry partners
- f) Funding agencies (where applicable)

This feedback shall be analyzed by the RDC and IQAC to identify gaps, develop action plans, update training needs, and refine policies. The University shall adopt a culture of continuous improvement by regularly updating research practices, infrastructure, guidelines, and capacity-building initiatives based on evidence and evolving national/global standards.

16. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

Sikkim Alpine University shall establish a structured mechanism for the effective implementation of the Research & Development Cell Policy. This mechanism ensures that all provisions outlined in the policy are formally adopted, disseminated, operationalized, and periodically reviewed in alignment with UGC regulations, NEP 2020, and institutional governance practices. The Research & Development Cell (RDC), in coordination with IQAC, the Registrar's office, and School/Departmental authorities, shall oversee the execution and monitoring of this policy.

16.1 Notification & Adoption

The Research & Development Cell Policy shall come into effect only after formal approval by the **Academic Council** and subsequent notification by the **Registrar (I/C)**. Once approved:

- a) The policy shall be circulated to all Schools, Departments, and administrative units.
- b) A copy shall be uploaded to the University website for public access.
- c) Orientation sessions will be conducted to ensure all faculty, researchers, and students understand the policy directives.
- d) All research processes, forms, and committees (AIP, ethics committees, DRCs, etc.) shall be activated as per the guidelines contained in the policy.

This ensures institutional-wide adoption and legal recognition of the policy.

16.2 Capacity Building for Faculty

To ensure effective implementation, the University shall conduct regular **capacity-building programs** for faculty members, research scholars, and laboratory staff. These will include:

- a) Workshops on research methodology, ethics, and academic integrity
- b) Training in funding proposal writing (DST/DBT/ICSSR/CSR etc.)
- c) Orientation on IPR, patent filing, and innovation
- d) Sessions on publication quality, Scopus/WoS standards, and avoiding predatory journals
- e) Technical training on laboratory safety, GLP, data management, and equipment usage

Capacity building ensures that faculty members are well-prepared to execute the policy and strengthen the University's research ecosystem.

16.3 Review and Revision Protocol

The Research & Development Cell Policy shall be reviewed periodically to remain relevant and aligned with evolving academic, regulatory, and societal needs.

- a) The **RDC and IQAC** shall jointly conduct a review every **three years**, or earlier if required by changes in UGC/NEP regulations.
- b) Recommendations for updates shall be placed before the Academic Council for approval.
- c) Revised versions shall be renotified by the Registrar and archived with a clear **version number** and **effective date**.
- d) Stakeholder feedback—including faculty, scholars, industry partners, and external experts—will inform policy revisions.

This ensures that the policy remains dynamic, contemporary, and responsive.

16.4 Conflict of Interest Management

The University shall establish clear guidelines for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest in all research-related activities. Conflicts may arise in:

- a) Research collaborations
- b) Funding applications
- c) Consultancy assignments
- d) Student supervision
- e) Procurement and resource allocation
- f) Start-up or entrepreneurial ventures

All faculty, researchers, and committee members must disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest using the University's prescribed format. The RDC and Registrar shall ensure that no committee member participates in decisions where a conflict exists. Transparent documentation and mitigation procedures shall be followed to uphold ethical governance and maintain institutional credibility.

17. RESEARCH GUIDELINES FOR HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES & INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE DISCIPLINES

Sikkim Alpine University recognizes that research in Humanities, Social Sciences, Indigenous Languages, Folklore, and Cultural Studies is foundational to the preservation, interpretation, and advancement of human knowledge, identity, and heritage. These disciplines follow methods rooted in interpretative analysis, narrative traditions, ethnographic inquiry, linguistic documentation, and cultural engagement. To ensure that such research receives appropriate institutional support and evaluation, the University shall adopt the following discipline-specific guidelines that honor cultural diversity, academic rigor, and indigenous rights.

17.1 Accepted Research Outputs

The University acknowledges that research in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems produces a wide range of scholarly outputs that differ from scientific publications. The following are recognized as valid and high-quality research contributions:

- a) Monographs and scholarly books**
- b) Critical essays and interpretative analyses**
- c) Annotated translations and bilingual editions**
- d) Linguistic documentation, grammars, and language corpora**
- e) Oral histories, narrative recordings, and life histories**
- f) Folklore documentation, myths, songs, and cultural narratives**
- g) Ethnographic and anthropological studies**
- h) Community-based cultural documentation and heritage reports**
- i) Dictionaries, glossaries, archival compilations, and lexicons**
- j) Cultural analysis reports, festival studies, and socio-cultural evaluations**

These outputs shall be treated on par with indexed journal publications in the sciences, for the purpose of academic recognition, promotion, and institutional appraisal.

17.2 Ethical Research Conduct in Humanities

Research involving communities, oral traditions, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge must follow strict ethical standards to ensure sensitivity and respect.

The University mandates the following ethical principles:

- a) **Cultural sensitivity and respectful engagement** with communities, elders, storytellers, practitioners, and cultural custodians.
- b) **Informed consent** for interviews, photos, recordings, translations, or documentation of cultural practices.
- c) **Respect for tribal intellectual property**, sacred knowledge, clan-restricted information, and culturally sensitive materials.
- d) **No exploitation or commodification** of traditional knowledge, folklore, medicinal practices, or heritage.
- e) **Consultation with community elders and knowledge-holders**, especially when interpreting cultural meanings or representing community narratives.
- f) **Fair representation and avoidance of cultural misinterpretation**, ensuring that research reflects community perspectives accurately.

These ethical norms ensure that indigenous and community-based knowledge is protected, honored, and documented responsibly.

17.3 Evaluation Criteria

To ensure fair and discipline-appropriate evaluation of research outputs in Humanities and Indigenous Knowledge disciplines, the University shall adopt the following criteria:

- a) **Depth and rigor of analysis**, including interpretative coherence and theoretical grounding.
- b) **Originality of interpretation**, contribution to new perspectives, and scholarly insight.
- c) **Accuracy and quality of translation**, linguistic fidelity, and cultural contextualization (where applicable).
- d) **Contribution to cultural preservation**, revitalization of endangered languages, and strengthening of indigenous heritage.
- e) **Methodological rigor**, including proper documentation, fieldwork practices, and adherence to discipline-specific research frameworks.

Evaluation panels shall include qualified experts from relevant fields, including linguists, cultural historians, folklorists, anthropologists, and community-based scholars.

17.4 Plagiarism Standards (Discipline-Specific)

The University acknowledges that conventional plagiarism detection tools are limited in handling indigenous languages (e.g., Lepcha, Limboo), oral traditions, translations, or narrative documentation. Therefore, plagiarism standards shall be adapted as follows:

- a) **Software-based plagiarism detection is optional**, and may be used only for the English commentary or analytical portion of the work.
- b) **Expert review must replace software-based checks** for indigenous-language content, oral histories, folklore, and cultural documentation.
- c) **Students must submit field notes, consent forms, transcripts, recordings, and observational logs** as proof of originality and authenticity.
- d) **Translation-based research shall be evaluated on comparative originality**, linguistic expertise, and cultural accuracy rather than software-generated similarity scores.
- e) **Supervisors and Departmental Research Committees shall certify originality** based on qualitative evaluation rather than numerical similarity indices.

This approach ensures fairness and cultural respect while maintaining academic integrity across all disciplines.

Through this comprehensive framework, Sikkim Alpine University ensures that Humanities, Social Sciences, Indigenous Languages, and Cultural Studies receive equal recognition, methodological sensitivity, and academic value within the University's research ecosystem. This section affirms the institution's commitment to inclusive research governance that aligns with NEP 2020, respects indigenous heritage, and supports multidisciplinary scholarship.