



AUTHOR, PEER REVIEW & PUBLICATION POLICY

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1. APPLICATION

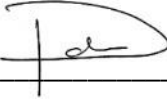
This policy applies to all paid, contracted and volunteering staff of the Sucon Consultancy Ltd (from here on referred to as 'Sucon'. This policy also applies to all Sucon associates, subcontractors and freelancers. This policy also extends to all business extensions of Sucon.

2 EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/11/2023

The Author, Peer Review Publication Policy applies to all Sucon relevant operations from the effective date stipulated above. From the date stipulated above all previous Author, Peer Review Publication Policy and practices are repealed.

3 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, APPROVAL, MONITOR AND REVIEW

The Central Administration and the responsible officer(s) of Sucon via the authority of the President, Vice President and Operations Manager are liable for the management and implementation of the Author, Peer Review Publication Policy and ensuring that its provisions and records management are applied and adhered to. This includes the establishment of relevant record-keeping systems.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	DETAILS
Policy Author	Eric Clem Groves, Vice President
Council Approval	 Lefaotogi Paletasala Faolotoi President
Next Review Date	November 2026

4 PURPOSE AND DEFINITION

This policy is to guide the submissions, acceptance and publication of articles, designs, books and creative works in the Pacific Projects Digest (PPD) which is the research and publication outlet of Sucon Consultancy Ltd. The Pacific Projects Digest is a multidisciplinary publication outlet devoted to project-based articles and studies mainly in the disciplines of architecture, engineering, project management, urban planning, science, TVET and other similar project-based vocations. The Pacific Projects Digest is a not-for-profit open-access online publisher of research and project-based case studies. We publish peer-reviewed papers, reports, opinion pieces, shorter communications, presentations and architectural or engineering designs and concepts.

5 SUCON PUBLICATION PRINCIPLES

The Sucon recognises that the Environmental Policy serves both the public good, in line with the Council's commitment to social responsibility, and the Sucon interests in maximising the potential impact of our services. Sucon's Environmental are as follows:

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Transparency

As a company, we are mandated to be transparent and non-biased with our decisions and the administration of submissions.



Accountability

We must hold ourselves accountable for our actions. In the same respect, we hold our authors, editors and contributors accountable for ensuring that we all reflect the values of our organisation.



Sustainability

We must ensure that our publication outlet is sustainable. That we are planning in preparing for the future and any potential setbacks. We are to adhere to international standards and values of sustainable publication.

6 POLICY ON AUTHORSHIP

The following principles define Sucon Consultancy Ltd's policy on authorship of publications.

6.1 Defining Authorship

An author is generally considered to be an individual who has made substantial intellectual contributions to a scientific investigation. All authors should meet the following three criteria, and all those who meet the criteria should be authors:

- a) **Scholarship:** Contribute significantly to the conception, design, execution, analysis and interpretation of data.
- b) **Authorship:** Participate in drafting, reviewing, and/or revising the manuscript for intellectual content.
- c) **Approval:** Approve the manuscript to be published.

6.2 Lead Author

As a practical matter in the case of publications with multiple authors, one author should be designated as the lead author. The lead author assumes overall responsibility for the manuscript and also often serves as the managerial and corresponding author, as well as providing a significant contribution to the research effort. A lead author is not necessarily the principal investigator or project leader. The lead author is responsible for:

- a) **Authorship:** Including as co-authors all and only those individuals who meet the authorship criteria outlined in this policy.
- b) **Approval:** Provide the draft of the manuscript to each individual contributing author for review and consent for authorship. The lead author should obtain from all coauthors their agreement to be designated as such and their approval of the manuscript. A Digest may have specific requirements governing author review and consent, which must be followed.

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- c) **Integrity:** The lead author is responsible for the integrity of the work as a whole, and for ensuring that reasonable care and effort have been taken to determine that all the data are complete, accurate, and reasonably interpreted.

6.3 Co-authors

All co-authors of a publication are responsible for:

- a) **Authorship:** By providing consent to authorship to the lead author, co-authors acknowledge that they meet the authorship criteria outlined in section 1 of this policy. A coauthor should have participated sufficiently in the work to take responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.
- b) **Approval:** By providing consent to authorship to the lead author, co-authors are acknowledging that they have reviewed and approved the manuscript.
- c) **Integrity:** Each co-author is responsible for the content of all appropriate portions of the manuscript, including the integrity of any applicable research. An individual retains the right to refuse co-authorship of a manuscript if s/he does not satisfy the criteria for authorship.

6.4 Authorship Order

The order of authors is a collective decision of the authors or study group. This policy does not address questions or disputes regarding the order of authorship on publications. The Pacific Projects Digest cannot define the order of authorship. In conjunction with the lead author, co-authors should discuss authorship order at the onset of the project and revise their decision as needed. All authors must work together to make these informed judgments.

Non-compliance with the Policy may result in criminal or civil penalties which will vary according to the offence. An employee acting in contravention of the Policy will also face disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

7 SUCON AND THE PACIFIC PROJECTS DIGEST POLICY ON COMPETING FINANCIAL INTERESTS

In the interests of transparency and to help readers form their judgments of potential bias, the Pacific Projects Digest require authors to declare to the editors any competing financial interests in relation to the work described. The corresponding author is responsible for submitting a competing financial interest statement on behalf of all authors of the paper. Authors submitting their manuscripts using the Digest's online manuscript tracking system are required to make their declaration as part of this process and to specify the competing interests in cases where they exist. In other cases, usually for articles that have been commissioned by an editor, the Digest office will send the author a form to complete and sign before publication of the article. A sample of the form sent to authors by the Digest office is available. Authors who have made a competing financial interest declaration as part of the online manuscript submission process do not need to complete and send a separate form. Authors are required to include a statement at the end of their article to declare whether or not they have any competing financial interests. If the statement is more than a few lines long, the details will be made available in the online version of the article.

7.1 Definition

For this statement, competing interests are defined as those of a financial Sucon Consultancy that, through their potential influence on behaviour or content or from the perception of such potential influences, could undermine the objectivity, integrity or perceived value of a publication.

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They can include any of the following:

- a) **Funding:** Research support (including salaries, equipment, supplies, reimbursement for attending symposia, and other expenses) by organizations that may gain or lose financially through this publication.
- b) **Employment:** Recent (while engaged in the research project), present or anticipated employment by any organisation that may gain or lose financially through this publication.
- c) **Personal financial interests:** Stocks or shares in companies that may gain or lose financially through publication; consultation fees or other forms of remuneration from organisations that may gain or lose financially; patents or patent applications whose value may be affected by publication. It is difficult to specify a threshold at which a financial interest becomes significant, but one possible practical alternative guideline will be: "Any undeclared competing financial interests that could embarrass you were they to become publicly known after your work was published."

The Mandatory Submission Form should be signed by the corresponding (submitting) author and the corresponding author's signature is sufficient provided that the corresponding author understands that he or she signs on behalf of the other authors who have not signed the form. An author's name can be removed only at his/her request, but all coauthors must sign a change of authorship agreement for any change in authorship (additions, removals, or change of order) to be made.

8 PEER-REVIEW POLICY

Peer review is widely accepted as an essential, if not the essential component, in the Pacific Projects Digest publication process:

8.1 General information

The Pacific Projects Digest provides a supportive publishing environment for project professionals, emerging authors and researchers, who simply want to share their experiences and expertise. The Pacific Projects Digest is comprised of the following:

- a) Peer-reviewed Articles and e-books
- b) Architectural or engineering designs and concepts.
- c) Shorter communication articles and opinion pieces
- d) Reports, Book and Media Reviews and Presentations.

All forms of published correction may also be peer-reviewed at the discretion of the editors. Other contributed articles are not usually peer-reviewed. Nevertheless, articles published in these sections, particularly if they present technical information, may be peer-reviewed at the discretion of the editors. For any general questions and comments about the peer-review process, the Digest or its editorial policies that are not addressed here, we encourage reviewers to contact us using the feedback link that will be made available by the editor in the mail. Questions about a specific manuscript should be directed to the editor who is handling the manuscript.

8.2 Online Manuscript Review

We ask peer-reviewers to submit their reports via our secure online system by following the link provided in the editor's email. There is an online help guide to assist in using this system, and a helpdesk email account for any technical problems.

8.3 Criteria for Publication

To be published in the Pacific Projects Digest, a paper should meet four general criteria:

- a) Provides strong evidence for its conclusions.
- b) Design, Concept, Presentation or Novel (we do not consider meeting report abstracts and preprints on community servers to compromise novelty and project delivery).
- c) Of extreme importance to scientists and researchers in the specific field in relation to projects.
- d) Ideally, interesting to researchers in other related disciplines linked to project management and delivery.

8.4 Reviewers Policy and Process

All submitted manuscripts are read by the editorial staff. To save time for authors and peer-reviewers, only those papers that seem most likely to meet our editorial criteria are sent for formal review. Those papers judged by the editors to be of insufficient general interest or otherwise inappropriate are rejected promptly without external review (although these decisions may be based on informal advice from specialists in the field). Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to our readership are sent for formal review, typically to two or three reviewers, but sometimes more if special advice is needed. The editors then make a decision based on the reviewers' advice, from among several possibilities:

- a) Accept, with or without editorial revisions
- b) Invite the authors to revise their manuscript to address specific concerns before a final decision is reached
- c) Reject, but indicate to the authors that further work might justify a resubmission
- d) Reject outright, typically on grounds of specialist interest, lack of novelty, insufficient conceptual advance or major technical and/or interpretational problems.

Reviewers are welcome to recommend a particular course of action, along with arguments for and against publication which are often more helpful to the editors. The Editorial Board will evaluate the strength of the arguments raised by each reviewer and may return to reviewers for further advice, particularly in cases where they disagree with each other, and will take the final decision in this regard. Editors will not send a resubmitted paper back to the reviewers if it seems that the authors have not made a serious attempt to address the criticisms.

8.5 Selection of Peer-Reviewers

Reviewer selection is critical to the publication process, and we base our choice on many factors, including expertise, reputation, specific recommendations and our own previous experience with a reviewer's characteristics.

8.6 Access to the literature

If a reviewer does not have access to any published paper that is necessary for the evaluation of a submitted manuscript, the Digest's editor will supply the reviewer with a copy.

8.7 Writing the review

The primary purpose of the review is to provide the editors with the information needed to reach a decision. Confidential comments to the editor are welcome, but it is helpful if the main points are stated in the comments for transmission to the authors. The ideal review should answer the following questions:

- Who will be interested in reading the paper, and why?

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- What are the main claims of the paper and how significant are they?
- Is the paper likely to be one of the five most significant papers published in the discipline this year?
- How does the paper stand out from others in its field?
- Are the claims novel? If not, which published papers compromise novelty?
- Are the claims convincing? If not, what further evidence is needed?
- Are there other experiments or work that would strengthen the paper further?
- How much would further work improve it, and how difficult would this be? Would it take a long time?
- Are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of previous literature?
- If the manuscript is unacceptable, is the study sufficiently promising to encourage the authors to resubmit?
- If the manuscript is unacceptable but promising, what specific work is needed to make it acceptable?

Other questions to consider

It is extremely helpful to the editors if reviewers can advise on some of the following points:

- Is the manuscript clearly written?
- If not, how could it be made more clear or accessible to non-specialists?
- Would readers outside the discipline benefit from a schematic of the main result to accompany publication?
- Could the manuscript be shortened? (Because of pressure on space in our printed pages we aim to publish manuscripts as short as is consistent with a persuasive message.)
- Should the authors be asked to provide supplementary methods or data to accompany the paper online? (Such data might include source code for modelling studies, detailed experimental protocols or mathematical derivations.)
- Have the authors done themselves justice without overselling their claims?
- Have they been fair in their treatment of previous literature?
- Have they provided sufficient methodological detail so that the experiments could be reproduced?
- Is the statistical analysis of the data sound, and does it conform to the Digest's guidelines?
- Are the reagents generally available?
- Are there any special ethical concerns arising from the use of human or other animal subjects?

8.8 Timing

Reviewers are expected to respond promptly within the number of days agreed. If reviewers anticipate a longer delay than previously expected, we ask them to let us know so that we can keep the authors informed and, where necessary, find alternatives.

8.9 Anonymity

We do not release reviewers' identities to authors or other reviewers, except when reviewers specifically ask to be identified. We ask reviewers not to identify themselves as authors without the editor's knowledge.

8.10 Editing Referees' Reports

As a matter of policy, we do not suppress reviewers' reports; any comments that were intended for the authors are transmitted, regardless of what we may think of the content. We strongly encourage reviewers to state plainly their opinion of a paper. We are

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continually impressed with peer review's positive impact on almost every paper we publish. Even papers that are misunderstood by reviewers are usually rewritten and improved before resubmission. Mistakes are made, but peer review, through conscientious effort on the part of referees, helps to protect the literature, promote good science and select the best.

8.11 Editorial decision-making

Decisions about types of correction are made by the editors of the Digest that published the paper, sometimes with peer-reviewers' advice. This process involves consultation with the authors of the paper, but the editor makes the final decision about the category in which the amendment is published.

8.12 Ethics and Security

The Pacific Projects Digest editors may seek advice about submitted papers not only from technical reviewers but also on any aspect of a paper that raises concerns. These may include, for example, ethical issues or issues of data or material access. Very occasionally, concerns may also relate to the implications to society of publishing a paper, including security threats. In such circumstances, advice will usually be sought simultaneously with the technical peer-review process. As in all publishing decisions, the ultimate decision whether to publish is the responsibility of the editor of the Digest concerned.

8.13 Reprints

As soon as the Pacific Projects Digest has agreed to publish a correction to a published paper, the author can contact the Administration by email, including the full publication reference in the message. Reprints can be altered to provide the corrected version if notification is received in time.

8.14 Supplementary information

In the Pacific Projects Digest, authors' corrections to supplementary information (SI) are made only in exceptional circumstances (for example major errors that compromise the conclusion of the study). Published corrections to SI are usually accompanied by a printed Corrigendum note. Authors cannot update SI because new data have become available or interpretations have changed, as the SI is a peer-reviewed and integral part of the paper, and hence part of the published record. SI cannot be amended between acceptance and publication unless a change made for technical reasons by the Digest to publish the material on the website has introduced a significant error.

8.15 Corrections to AOP articles

The policy of the Pacific Projects Digest is that corrections are rarely made to Advance Online Publication (AOP) articles before they appear in the print version of the Digest. If a very significant error is discovered after the publication of an AOP article but before the print version has gone to press, the editors will decide whether to amend the AOP article. If a correction is made to the online version, a footnote is added to state that: first, there was an error in the AOP version of the article; second, the error has since been corrected in the HTML and PDF versions; and third, that the article will appear correctly in a forthcoming print issue.

8.16 Confidentiality

The Pacific Projects Digests keep all details about a submitted manuscript confidential and

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do not comment to any outside organization about manuscripts under consideration by the Digests while they are under consideration or if they are rejected. The editors themselves are not allowed to discuss manuscripts with third parties or to reveal information about correspondence and other interactions with authors and referees. Referees of manuscripts submitted to Pacific Projects Digests undertake in advance to maintain the confidentiality of manuscripts and any associated supplementary data.

8.17 Prior Publication

Material published by the author before submission in the following categories is considered prior publication:

- a) articles published in any publication, even online-only, non-peer-reviewed publications;
- b) articles, book chapters, and long abstracts containing original data in figures and tables, especially in proceedings publications as well as posters containing original data disseminated beyond meeting attendees, e.g., displayed on websites such as that maintained by F1000 or AI;
- c) Widely circulated, copyrighted, or archival reports.

Doctoral dissertations that are made available by UMI/Proquest/NDLTD/UGC INFLIBNET or institutional repositories are not considered prior publication. Similarly, the papers included as a part of the proceedings of a conference or in a compendium about a conference are not considered prior publication. But, the papers published by Sucon, etc. (having ISSN), in such proceedings are considered prior publication. Data portions of submitted papers that have appeared on a website will be permitted, with the proviso that the author informs the Editor at the time of the submission that such material exists so that the Editor can determine the suitability of such material for publication. Failure to do so will result in an automatic rejection of the manuscript. After the article is published in the Digest, the data should be removed from the author's website. Authors with concerns about a possible prior publication that does not fall clearly into one of these categories should contact the Chairman of CU Publications Bureau and forward the material for examination.

9 IMAGE INTEGRITY, TABLES, FIGURES STANDARDS

Images submitted with a manuscript for review should be minimally processed (for instance, to add arrows to a micrograph). Authors should retain their unprocessed data and metadata files, as editors may request them to aid in manuscript evaluation. If unprocessed data are unavailable, manuscript evaluation may be stalled until the issue is resolved. All digitized images submitted with the final revision of the manuscript must be of high quality and have resolutions of at least 300 d.p.i. for colour, 600 d.p.i. for greyscale and 1,200 d.p.i. for line art. A certain degree of image processing is acceptable for publication (and for some experiments, fields and techniques are unavoidable), but the final image must correctly represent the original data and conform to community standards. The guidelines below will aid in accurate data presentation at the image processing level; authors must also take care to exercise prudence during data acquisition, where misrepresentation must equally be avoided.

- a) Authors should list all image acquisition tools and image processing software packages used. Authors should document key image-gathering settings and processing manipulations in the Methods.
- b) Images gathered at different times or from different locations should not be combined into a single image unless it is stated that the resultant image is a product of time-averaged data or a time-lapse sequence. If juxtaposing images is essential, the borders should be demarcated in the figure and described in the legend.

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- c) The use of touch-up tools, such as cloning and healing tools in Photoshop, or any feature that deliberately obscures manipulations, is to be avoided.
- d) Processing (such as changing brightness and contrast) is appropriate only when it is applied equally across the entire image and is applied equally to controls. Contrast should not be adjusted so that data disappear. Excessive manipulations, such as processing to emphasize one region in the image at the expense of others (for example, through the use of a biased choice of threshold settings), is inappropriate, as is emphasizing experimental data relative to the control. When submitting revised final figures upon conditional acceptance, authors may be asked to submit original, unprocessed images.

9.1 Electrophoretic gels and blots

Positive and negative controls, as well as molecular size markers, should be included on each gel and blot – either in the main figure or an expanded data supplementary figure. For previously characterized antibodies, a citation must be provided. For antibodies less well characterized in the system under study, a detailed characterization that demonstrates not only the specificity of the antibody but also the range of reactivity of the reagent in the assay should be published as Supplementary Information or in an antibody profile database (e.g., Antibodypedia, 1DegreeBio). The display of cropped gels and blots in the main paper is encouraged if it improves the clarity and conciseness of the presentation. In such cases, the cropping must be mentioned in the figure legend. (Some journals require full-length gels and blots in supplementary information wherever possible.)

- a) Quantitative comparisons between samples on different gels/blots are discouraged; if this is unavoidable, the figure legend must state that the samples derive from the same experiment and that gels/blots were processed in parallel. Vertically sliced images that juxtapose lanes that were non-adjacent in the gel must have a clear separation or a black line delineating the boundary between the gels. Loading controls (e.g., GAPDH, actin) must be run on the same blot. Sample processing controls run on different gels must be identified as such and distinctly from loading controls.
- b) Cropped gels in the paper must retain important bands.
- c) Cropped blots in the body of the paper should retain at least six bandwidths above and below the band
- d) High-contrast gels and blots are discouraged, as overexposure may mask additional bands. Authors should strive for exposures with grey backgrounds. Multiple exposures should be presented in supplementary information if high contrast is unavoidable.
- e) For quantitative comparisons, appropriate reagents, controls and imaging methods with linear signal ranges should be used. Microscopy Authors should be prepared to supply the editors with original data on request, at the resolution collected, from which their images were generated. Cells from multiple fields should not be juxtaposed in a single field; instead multiple supporting fields of cells should be shown as Supplementary Information. Specific guidelines: Adjustments should be applied to the entire image. Threshold manipulation, expansion or contraction of signal ranges and the altering of high signals should be avoided. If ‘Pseudo-coloring’ and nonlinear adjustment (for example ‘gamma changes’) are used, this must be disclosed. Adjustments of individual colour channels are sometimes necessary on ‘merged’ images, but this should be noted in the figure legend. We encourage the inclusion of the following with the final revised version of the manuscript for publication:
- f) In the Methods, specify the type of equipment (microscopes/objective lenses,

cameras, detectors, and filter model and batch number) and acquisition software used. Although we appreciate that there is some variation between instruments, equipment settings for critical measurements should also be listed.

- g) A single Supplementary Methods file (or part of a larger Methods section) titled 'equipment and settings' should list for each image: acquisition information, including time and space resolution data (xyzt and pixel dimensions); image bit depth; experimental conditions such as temperature and imaging medium; and fluorochromes (excitation and emission wavelengths or ranges, filters, dichroic beamsplitters, if any).
- h) The display lookup table (LUT) and the quantitative map between the LUT and the bitmap should be provided, especially when rainbow pseudocolour is used. If the LUT is linear and covers the full range of the data, that should be stated.
- i) Processing software should be named and manipulations indicated (such as type of deconvolution, three-dimensional reconstructions, surface and volume rendering, 'gamma changes', filtering, thresholding and projection).
- j) Authors should state the measured resolution at which an image was acquired and any downstream processing or averaging that enhances the resolution of the image.

10 CORRECTION AND RETRACTION POLICY

We recognize our responsibility to correct errors that we have previously published. Our policy is to consider refutations (readers' criticisms) of primary research papers and to publish them (in concise form) if and only if the author provides compelling evidence that a major claim of the original paper was incorrect. Refutations are peer-reviewed, and where possible they are sent to the same referees who reviewed the original paper. Some submitted refutations are eventually published as retractions by the paper's authors. In both cases, the published refutation or retraction is linked online to the original paper, and the published paper is linked online to the refutation or retraction. Editorial decisions in such cases are based on considerations of reader interest, the novelty of arguments, the integrity of the publication record and fairness to the parties involved. Publication may take various forms at the discretion of the editor.

The Pacific Projects Digest operate the following policy for making corrections to the print and online versions of their peer-reviewed content. Publishable amendments requested by the authors of the publication are represented by a formal printed and online notice in the Digest because they affect the publication record and/or the scientific accuracy of published information. Where these amendments concern peer-reviewed material, they fall into one of four categories: erratum, corrigendum, retraction or addendum, as described here.

- a) **Erratum:** Notification of an important error made by the Digest that affects the publication record the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors, or the Digest.
- b) **Corrigendum:** Notification of an important error made by the author(s) that affects the publication record or the scientific integrity of the paper, the reputation of the authors or the Digest. All authors must sign the corrigenda submitted for publication. In cases where coauthors disagree, the editors will take advice from independent peer-reviewers and impose the appropriate amendment, noting the dissenting author(s) in the text of the published version.
- c) **Retraction:** Notification of invalid results. All coauthors must sign a retraction specifying the error and stating briefly how the conclusions are affected, and submit it for publication. In cases where coauthors disagree, the editors will seek advice from independent peer-reviewers and impose the type of amendment that seems most appropriate, noting the dissenting author(s) in the text of the published version.

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- d) **Addendum:** Notification of a peer-reviewed addition of information to a paper, usually in response to readers' request for clarification. Addenda are published only rarely and only when the editors decide that the addendum is crucial to the reader's understanding of a significant part of the published contribution.

11 DUPLICATION. PLAGIARISM, FALSIFICATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The Pacific Projects Digest accept only papers that are original work, no part of which has been published elsewhere except as brief abstracts. When submitting a paper, the corresponding author should include along with the cover letter, copies of related manuscripts submitted or in press elsewhere. Authors must disclose any such information while their contributions are under consideration by the Pacific Projects Digest - for example, if they submit a related manuscript elsewhere that was not written at the time of the original Pacific Projects Digest submission. Consideration by the Pacific Projects Digest is possible if the main result, conclusion, or implications are not apparent from the other work, or if there are other factors, for example, if the other work is published in a language other than English or Samoan.

Taking material from another's work and submitting it as one's own is considered plagiarism. Such manuscripts would not be considered for publication in a Pacific Projects Digest. But minor plagiarism without dishonest intent is relatively frequent, for example, when an author reuses parts of an introduction from an earlier paper. The Pacific Projects Digest editors judge any case of which they become aware (either by their knowledge of and reading about the literature, or when alerted by referees) on its own merits. If a case of plagiarism comes to light after a paper is published in a Pacific Projects Digest, the Digest will conduct a preliminary investigation. If plagiarism is found, the Digest will contact the author's institute and funding agencies. A determination of misconduct will lead the Pacific Projects Digest to run a statement, bidirectional linked online to and from the original paper, to note the plagiarism and to provide a reference to the plagiarized material.

The paper containing the plagiarism will also be marked on each page of the PDF. Depending on the extent of the plagiarism, the paper may also be formally retracted. Taking material (including tables, figures, and data; or extended text passages) from the authors' prior publications is considered duplicate publication or self-plagiarism and is not permitted. An author reuses substantial parts of his or her own published work without providing the appropriate references. This can range from getting an identical paper published in multiple publication outlets, to 'salami-slicing', where authors add small amounts of new data to a previous paper. Fabricating a report of research or suppressing or altering data to agree with one's conclusions is considered a fraud; this includes altering figures in such a way as to obscure, move, remove, or introduce information or features.

11.1 Prohibition of AI Usage:

Authors are strictly prohibited from using AI, machine learning algorithms, or any other automated tools to complete their projects and/or study, including but not limited to articles, reports, presentations, programming assignments, and problem-solving tasks. All submitted projects and/or articles must be the original work of the author, and any use of AI or automated tools to generate content, ideas, or solutions is strictly prohibited.

Academic Integrity:

Authors are expected to uphold the principles of academic integrity, honesty, and responsibility in all academic activities. Plagiarism, including the use of AI-generated content without proper attribution, is a violation of academic integrity and will be subject to

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disciplinary action.

11.2 Appeal Process

Verdicts that are believed to be unfair by the Administration can be challenged via writing to the Council. Verdicts believed to be unfair by the Council must be challenged in writing to the Legal Counsellor as stipulated in the 'Misconduct Process and Procedures'.

11.3 Whistle Blower Protection and Retaliation Prevention

All Sucon staff, Council, and affiliate members are responsible for protecting the identity, security, and employment of the whistle-blower to prevent confrontation and retaliation from the alleged suspect and violator. Sucon staff, Council and affiliating members found to have leaked the identity of the whistle-blower are subject to suspension or termination by the Council or Administration depending on the level and severity of the case. Sucon staff, Council and affiliating members found to have participated directly or indirectly in retaliation are subject to suspension or termination by the Council or Administration depending on the level and severity of the case.

Whistle-blowers who are found to have falsified claims in an attempt for defamation are also subject to suspension or termination by the Council or Administration depending on the level and the severity of the case.

10. POLICY FEEDBACK

All Sucon employees and associates may provide feedback about this document by emailing info@sucon.ws

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