

Human Resources, Research Ethics and GEI
Policy Manual
of
Phutung Research Institute



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List of amendments

S. No	Date	Amendments Details
1	Nov 30, 2018	Whistleblower policy (Ch 14), Research Integrity Policy (Ch 15) included.
2	Nov 29, 2019	Sec 12.1.1 and Annex VII reviewed to include three grades of Laboratory Staff in the Grading Scheme
3	Dec 25, 2021	Updated with language changes, incorporating safety rules and new grading scheme
4	Dec 6, 2024	Added Section 12.2.5: Retention Allowance
5	Dec 14, 2025	Revised Gender Equality Plan, Mental Health, Flexible Work, Right to Disconnect; formatting consolidated; repetitions removed; structural renumbering applied.

1. Definitions and acronyms

1. PRI: Phutung Research Institute
2. BoD: Board of Directors or their representatives, such as the Managing Director
3. HR: Human Resource
4. HRM: Human Resource Manager
5. LWOP: Leave without pay
6. PPR: Participatory Performance Review
7. GEP: Gender Equality Plan
8. GEO: Gender Equality Officer
9. ADAHC: Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Committee, also acting as Gender Equality & Inclusion Committee
10. Where the word “institute” is used in this manual, it shall be taken to mean PRI.
11. Where the word “Manual” is used, it shall be taken to mean this Policy Manual of PRI.
12. Where “manager” is stated, it means immediate supervisor or higher-level staff.
13. **Confidential Information:** all unpublished data and information from PRI or its partners, includes but is not limited to — inventions; technical information; algorithms, designs, concepts, systems, laboratory setup, scientific experiments, experimental data, techniques, methods, models, procedures, or processes; know-how or methodologies; manuals, contracts, or reports; purchasing or accounting information; regulatory information and communications related thereto; financial history or projections; legal affairs; formulae; compositions; software or computer programs; research projects; business modes and information; personnel information (including the identity of Company employees, their responsibilities, competence, abilities, and compensation); medical information about employees; pricing and nonpublic financial information; lists of current and prospective partners and information on partners or their employees; information concerning planned or pending acquisitions or divestitures; and information concerning purchases of major

equipment or property; the identity of all vendors, vendor lists, and vendor contact information; financial data; sources of supply; and information pertaining to any aspect of any activity of PRI or its partners, including information entrusted to PRI by third parties (including vendors and prospective partners), or any trade secrets, proprietary or confidential matter of PRI or of such third parties.

14. SOP: Standard Operating Procedures

2. Legal matters and general guidance

1. This policy manual describes a set of minimum standards of human resources management, best research practices and research integrity and to ensure uniformity, transparency, fairness, and openness. Matters not covered in this manual shall be interpreted and applied according to the prevailing law of the country, prevailing international best practices, and the decisions of the BoD.
2. The BoD shall have the final responsibility for the interpretation, administration, application, and amendment of this Manual. Where the BoD is stated, this shall be understood to mean either the BoD or that authority delegated to the staff member designated by the BoD.
3. The President of the BoD shall authenticate each page of this document for validity.
4. PRI will adjust, amend and add to this policy according to circumstances. Any amendments will be incorporated on the online document directly and notified to the concerned employees upon approval from the BoD. A copy of the prevailing policy shall be made available online.
5. **Gender Equality Plan (GEP):** The Institutional Gender Equality Plan has been formally approved by the BoD and is published on the institute's public website at [PRI website URL]. The GEP is included in the mandatory onboarding documentation for all new hires and is accessible to all personnel via the institutional intranet. A signed, dated PDF of the GEP, the Board resolution approving it, and all supporting documentation (GEO appointment letter, training curricula) are maintained in a secure internal repository for audit purposes.
6. A Nepali translation of this manual may be prepared but, for the purpose of interpretation of these regulations, the English version will be considered authoritative.
7. This manual applies to all staff recruited by PRI irrespective of the nature of employment, unless otherwise explicitly mentioned in the employment contract. All members of staff are expected to abide strictly by the rules, regulation, terms and conditions set out in this manual. Employees themselves are responsible to understand the rules and regulations stated in this manual; however, PRI may facilitate this through orientation of their staff.
8. The policies and procedures stated in this manual are effective from the date of its approval by the BoD on Nov 11, 2017. This updated version is effective from Dec 14, 2025, and supersedes all previous HR policies of the institute.

3. Guiding principles for HR policy

1. The happiness, good health, safety, career growth, and freedom at work for all staff is the prime responsibility of the institute. This principle is paramount to achieve the goals of this institute.
2. Development, implementation and monitoring of human resources policies and practices should rely on appropriate consultation and communication with the employees.

3. HR policies shall be fair and transparent. PRI aims to ensure shared responsibility and accountability at all levels of management.
4. **Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI):** PRI is an equal opportunity employer. Consistent and fair policies and practices are applied to attract the workforce with the skills and capabilities required to fulfill the institute's objectives and strategic aims to ensure that all individuals — regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, caste, disabilities (unless it directly affects the work), religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or age — have equal opportunities. PRI actively pursues diversity in its workforce and is committed to:
 - Achieving gender balance at all levels of the organization
 - Eliminating structural barriers to career progression for underrepresented groups
 - Providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities
 - Maintaining zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment
 - the international standards for DEI, including the institutional adoption and public disclosure of a Gender Equality Plan with dedicated resources, data collection, and monitoring.
5. PRI recognizes the importance of relevant training, development and learning opportunities, both at personal and professional level. The aim is to maintain a culture of learning in the institute so that staff can share, learn and develop together.

4. Declaration of any Conflicts of Interests

1. All employees, trainees and interns will put the institute's interests before any other prior, existing or potential commitment they may have to another person or entities.
2. In cases where such conflicting commitments exist, the staff must inform the management in order to determine if the commitment constitutes an actual or potential "conflict of interest."
3. Both actual and potential conflicts of interest are equally serious matters. Anyone who has not informed the BoD within five working days when these situations arise will face disciplinary action. Specifically, the following rules then need to be followed strictly.
 - While working full time for PRI, the employee will not take any employment, consultancy services and advisory roles, with any other legal entities without written approval.
 - If an employee is a board member of any other entity, the employee will not take part in any official transactions with that entity on behalf of PRI without a formal negotiation at the BoD level.
 - The employee will not disclose any information/documents in any form, or transfer materials of any kind, from the PRI systems and processes, nor will s/he publish any of PRI related information without formal approval from BoD.

5. Access to information, unpublished intellectual properties, and confidential information

Employees, trainees and interns will get permission to access the information that is needed to perform their task. Limited access is provided to highly sensitive information. In certain cases, a supervisor can grant access to the information with permission from the BoD and the corresponding procedures for handling such information to his/her subordinates.

The employees may obtain access to unpublished intellectual properties and confidential information (as defined in Section 1 of this manual). The institute requires the staff, trainees and interns to maintain strict confidentiality of such information.

Misappropriation of any confidential information, or disclosing such information to any entity in any form is strictly prohibited, punishable as gross misconduct, and is punishable as intellectual property theft. The staff shall keep the matter confidential even after termination of their employment. The employee must return all Confidential Information, including any copies, summaries or compilations of any Confidential Information, to the employer upon the termination of employment. Any violation of these obligations will subject the employee to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include immediate suspension or termination. These obligations will continue in effect beyond the termination of employment.

6. Safety at work

Maintaining safety at work is the responsibility of the staff members. PRI commits to create and maintain a safe and healthful workplace free from recognized hazards that may cause harm to employees. Employees will play an active role in creating a safe and healthy workplace, for their own safety and for the safety of fellow employees, and will comply with all applicable health and safety rules at the institute. PRI does not bear responsibility for any accidents created deliberately by the staff or by their negligence, non-compliance and omissions of its safety rules and regulations.

A standard list of basic laboratory safety rules are given below, and must be followed in every laboratory that uses hazardous materials or processes. These basic rules provide behavior, hygiene, and safety information to avoid accidents in the laboratory. Laboratory specific safety rules may be required for specific processes, equipment, and materials, which should be addressed by laboratory specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

6.1 Basic Safety Rules

1. Know locations of laboratory safety showers, eyewash stations, and fire extinguishers. The safety equipment may be located in the hallway near the laboratory entrance.
2. Know emergency exit routes.
3. Avoid skin and eye contact with all chemicals.
4. Minimize all chemical exposures.
5. No horseplay will be tolerated.
6. Assume that all chemicals of unknown toxicity are highly toxic.
7. Post warning signs when unusual hazards, hazardous materials, hazardous equipment, or other special conditions are present.
8. Avoid distracting or startling persons working in the laboratory.

9. Use equipment only for its designated purpose.
10. Combine reagents in their appropriate order, such as adding acid to water.
11. Avoid adding solids to hot liquids.
12. All laboratory personnel should place emphasis on safety and chemical hygiene at all times.
13. Never leave containers of chemicals open.
14. All containers must have appropriate labels. Unlabeled chemicals should never be used.
15. Do not taste or intentionally sniff chemicals.
16. Never consume and/or store food or beverages or apply cosmetics in areas where hazardous chemicals are used or stored.
17. Do not use mouth suction for pipetting or starting a siphon.
18. Wash exposed areas of the skin prior to leaving the laboratory.
19. Long hair and loose clothing must be pulled back and secured from entanglement or potential capture.
20. No contact lenses should be worn around hazardous chemicals — even when wearing safety glasses.
21. Laboratory safety glasses or goggles should be worn in any area where chemicals are used or stored. They should also be worn anytime there is a chance of splashes or particulates to enter the eye. Closed toe shoes will be worn at all times in the laboratory. Perforated shoes or sandals are not appropriate.
22. Determine the potential hazards and appropriate safety precautions before beginning any work.
23. Procedures should be developed that minimize the formation and dispersion of aerosols.
24. If an unknown chemical is produced in the laboratory, the material should be considered hazardous.
25. Do not pour chemicals down drains. Do NOT utilize the sewer for chemical waste disposal.
26. Keep all sink traps (including cup sink traps and floor drains) filled with water by running water down the drain at least monthly.
27. Do not utilize fume hoods for evaporations and disposal of volatile solvents.
28. Perform work with hazardous chemicals in a properly working fume hood to reduce potential exposures.
29. Avoid working alone in a building. Do not work alone in a laboratory if the procedures being conducted are hazardous.
30. The Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) and the Threshold Limit Values (TLV) will be observed in all areas. If exposure above a PEL/TLV is suspected for an ongoing process, please contact the supervisor immediately.
31. Laboratory employees should have access to a chemical inventory list, applicable SDSs, Department Laboratory Safety Manual, and relevant SOPs.
32. Access to laboratories and support areas such as stockrooms, specialized laboratories, etc. should be limited to approved personnel only.
33. All equipment should be regularly inspected for wear or deterioration.

34. Equipment should be maintained according to the manufacturer's requirements and records of certification, maintenance, or repairs should be maintained for the life of the equipment.
35. Designated and well-marked waste storage locations are necessary.
36. No cell phone or ear phone usage in the active portion of the laboratories, or during experimental operations.
37. Clothing made of synthetic fibers should not be worn while working with flammable liquids or when a fire hazard is present as these materials tend to melt and stick to exposed skin.
38. Laboratory coats should not be stored in offices or break rooms as this spreads contaminants to other areas.
39. Computers and instrumentation should be labeled to indicate whether gloves should be worn or not. Inconsistent glove use around keyboards/keypads is a source of potential contamination.
40. Avoid wearing jewelry in the lab as this can pose multiple safety hazards.
41. When working with equipment, hazardous materials, glassware, heat, and/or chemicals, always wear face shields or safety glasses.
42. When handling any toxic or hazardous agent, always wear the appropriate gloves.
43. When performing laboratory experiments, you should always wear a smock or lab coat.
44. Before leaving the lab or eating, always wash your hands.
45. After performing an experiment, always wash your hands with soap and water.
46. When using lab equipment and chemicals, be sure to keep your hands away from your body, mouth, eyes, and face.

Note: Items 41–46 above consolidate the Personal Protection Safety Rules (formerly a separate subsection) into the Basic Safety Rules to avoid overlap. For specialized PPE requirements beyond these, refer to laboratory-specific SOPs.

6.2 Housekeeping safety rules

1. Laboratory housekeeping rules also apply to most facilities and deal with the basic upkeep, tidiness, and maintenance of a safe laboratory.
2. Always keep your work area(s) tidy and clean.
3. Make sure that all eyewash stations, emergency showers, fire extinguishers, and exits are always unobstructed and accessible.
4. Only materials you require for your work should be kept in your work area. Everything else should be stored safely out of the way.
5. Only lightweight items should be stored on top of cabinets; heavier items should always be kept at the bottom.
6. Solids should always be kept out of the laboratory sink.
7. Any equipment that requires air flow or ventilation to prevent overheating should always be kept clear.
8. Dress code safety rules
9. Always tie back hair that is chin-length or longer.

10. Make sure that loose clothing or dangling jewelry is secured, or avoid wearing it in the first place.
11. Never wear sandals or other open-toed shoes in the lab. Footwear should always cover the foot completely.
12. Never wear shorts or skirts in the lab.
13. When working with Bunsen burners, lighted splints, matches, etc., acrylic nails are not allowed.

6.3 Chemical safety rules

1. Every chemical should be treated as though it were dangerous.
2. Do not allow any solvent to come into contact with your skin.
3. All chemicals should always be clearly labeled with the name of the substance, its concentration, the date it was received, and the name of the person responsible for it.
4. Before removing any of the contents from a chemical bottle, read the label twice.
5. Never take more chemicals from a bottle than you need for your work.
6. Do not put unused chemicals back into their original container.
7. Chemicals or other materials should never be taken out of the laboratory.
8. Chemicals should never be mixed in sink drains.
9. Flammable and volatile chemicals should only be used in a fume hood.
10. If a chemical spill occurs, clean it up right away.
11. Ensure that all chemical waste is disposed of properly.
12. Before you start an experiment, make sure you are fully aware of the hazards of the materials you'll be using.
13. When refluxing, distilling, or transferring volatile liquids, always exercise extreme caution.
14. Always pour chemicals from large containers to smaller ones.
15. Never pour chemicals that have been used back into the stock container.
16. Never tap flasks that are under vacuum.
17. Chemicals should never be mixed, measured, or heated in front of your face.
18. Water should not be poured into concentrated acid. Instead, pour acid slowly into water while stirring constantly. In many cases, mixing acid with water is exothermic.

6.4 Electrical safety rules

1. Before using any high voltage equipment (voltages above 50 Vrms ac and 50V dc), make sure you get permission from your lab supervisor.
2. High voltage equipment should never be changed or modified in any way.
3. Always turn off a high voltage power supply when you are attaching it.
4. Use only one hand if you need to adjust any high voltage equipment. It's safest to place your other hand either behind your back or in a pocket.
5. Make sure all electrical panels are unobstructed and easily accessible.

6. Whenever you can, avoid using extension cords.

6.5 Laser safety rules

1. Even if you are certain that a laser beam is “eye” safe or low power, you should never look into it.
2. Always wear the appropriate goggles in areas of the lab where lasers are present. The most common laser injuries are those caused by scattered laser light reflecting either off the shiny surface of optical tables, the sides of mirrors, or off of mountings. Goggles will help you avoid damage from such scattered light.
3. You should never keep your head at the same level as the laser beam.
4. Always keep the laser beam at or below chest level.
5. Laser beams should never be allowed to spread into the lab. Beam stops should always be used to intercept laser beams.
6. Do not walk through laser beams.

7. Employment policies

7.1 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

7.1.1 New Posts

1. The BoD, in consultation with respective supervisors is the only appointing/terminating authority for any staff position in PRI.
2. Vacancies for all positions will generally be advertised, either internally or externally or both.
3. In special circumstances, a vacancy or a new position may be filled without any advertisement as decided by the BoD depending on the urgency of the case and the greater interest of the institute.

7.1.2 Vacant Existing Positions

All vacancies for existing positions created through resignation, termination or retirement shall be communicated to the BoD. The respective managers will advise to the BoD (a) whether the vacant position is still required; (b) whether the vacancy should be filled internally or externally.

7.1.3 Advertising of New and Vacant Positions

Advertisement for positions can be done at any time during the year, according to need. However, it is recommended, where time permits, to include more than one vacancy per advertisement. The intention of advertising vacancies is (a) to ensure that a competitive choice of good applicants is received from which the best and most suitable person for the job can be selected; and (b) that, for internal vacancies, existing staff receives a fair opportunity to compete for vacancies.

External advertisements require posting notices through recognized channels. This may be an advertisement placed on the relevant websites, local or national newspapers and/or posting of vacancy notices at the offices of other relevant institutes.

Gender-neutral language: All external job descriptions and vacancy notices shall be reviewed using a digital gender-neutral text analyzer prior to publication, to identify and remove exclusionary or gendered language that may deter qualified applicants.

7.1.4 Application/Recruitment Criteria

For each position advertised, applicants must normally fulfill the minimum recruitment criteria, as described in Section 11.1.1, in terms of educational/professional qualifications and experience for each grade in order to have their application considered. Only in exceptional cases will the minimum criteria be waived in order to recruit very deserving candidates. Candidates are expected to produce proof of qualification and experience. Candidates submitting false CV or forged certificates will be instantly disqualified. An application for any post shall be made on the prescribed form or according to specific instructions as stipulated in the advertisement.

7.1.5 Selection Procedure

For filling both new and vacant positions, a selection committee appointed by the BoD, comprising a minimum of three people will arrange and conduct the selection process. The committee will decide on the best means of screening applicants, which may include interview, written test or other appropriate instruments.

Gender balance on selection panels: All internal committees, advisory boards, and selection panels shall aim for a minimum representation of 40% women, 40% men, and 20% any gender or non-binary individuals (the 40:40:20 target). No individual may chair a recruitment or promotion panel without having completed mandatory unconscious bias training (see Section 12.2.10). Where the 40:40:20 target cannot be met, the convener shall document the reasons and report to the Gender Equality Officer.

Diverse shortlists: Recruitment panels must aim for diversity in shortlisted candidates. If a minimum qualified diversity threshold is not met within the applicant pool, the panel must document the rationale before proceeding to interviews. Under no circumstances shall a shortlist be single-gender unless objectively justified.

After completion of the process for screening candidates, the selection committee is responsible to check the reference/background of the successful candidate(s). Once the screening process is complete, the committee will submit their recommendations to the PRI BoD.

7.2 APPOINTMENTS

7.2.1 Code of Appointments

1. Applicants will be appointed on the basis of suitability, knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior, voluntary spirit and their commitment to PRI's long-term and short-term goals.
2. As a necessary step in finalizing their appointment, all new staff must receive and agree to follow the PRI policies.
3. New appointees will also be required to complete biographic data (personal information) form (Annex II) to be included in personal file.
4. Staff should communicate any changes in their personal information by providing a revised bio-data. A copy of relationship certificates (e.g. marriage, birth, citizenship, adoption etc.) should be submitted to prove the relationship of the family members.

7.2.2 Nature of Appointments

7.2.2.1 Regular Employment and Probation

Regular employment occurs under an open-ended contract, requires successful completion of the probation period, and is valid for as long as the need for them exists in the institute's activities.

Every new employee under regular employment will be issued an initial contract appointment using the standard format. The contract appointment will normally be for a minimum probationary period of 6 months. This period can be extended up to a year depending on the performance. The probationary appointment of every staff member shall take effect from the date on which the staff member starts to perform his/her duties, after the employment contract is approved by the BoD. Former PRI staff hired at similar positions and the same grade may not need to go through a probation period.

All newly recruited staff are generally placed on step 0 at the appropriate grade for the post. However, in certain cases, previous relevant experience with similar organizations may be taken into consideration when placing a worker in the salary scale.

At the end of the probation period, the appointment will either be regularized or discontinued. PRI will make best efforts to, but does not need to, provide any reasons for releasing staff on probation.

During the probation period, staff will be entitled to receive basic salary, steps and allowances but will not be entitled to provident fund and gratuity contribution. In the probation period, leave shall be allowed on a pro-rata basis at the rate of 2 days annual and 1-day sick leave per month.

If the employee's personal evaluation by the respective manager, as approved by the BoD, is found to be satisfactory in both work performance and conduct throughout the probation period, the appointment will be regularized by signing another contract by both parties. The performance evaluation will be kept in the personal file.

Once a regular contract is signed, the staff will be entitled to the regular benefits as per this policy manual.

7.2.2.2 Temporary or Project Employment

To carry out special assignments, or to carry out duties for a specific project, PRI may engage some employees under temporary contracts. Temporary contract employment will be for a fixed period, usually not exceeding 12 months, and all terms of employment will be stated in the written contract between PRI and the employee.

The contract may be renewed upon mutual agreement of employer and employee. The contract employment remuneration will be a single monthly sum taking into consideration all allowances and benefits, as mentioned in the contract. Part-time employment shall also be considered as a type of temporary contract employment. The number of working hours constituting the part time employment shall be clearly stated in the written contract. The part-time contract salary will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. The benefits for Temporary or Project Employees shall be mentioned in the contract, and the provisions of this Manual shall serve as a guideline for decisions to be made by the BoD, in case such provisions are not mentioned explicitly in the contract.

7.2.2.3 Short-term, Casual, Internship appointments

Any short-term, casual or internship appointments can be made by the project leaders with written approval from the BoD. The tenure of employment is typically for four months, however, it may be varied depending on the nature of the work, life of the project, budget allocation and funds

available. Remuneration for short-term and casual workers should, in general, be in accordance with the prevailing market rate for such skills and will be clearly indicated in the contract.

Internship appointments are generally not paid, but a regular allowance of up to Rs 5,000 may be provided towards lunch and daily commute if there is a need. This allowance amount shall be reviewed every two years for adequacy against inflation and market conditions. Other benefits will not be provided to short-term, casual workers or interns.

8. WORKING TIME

8.1 WORKING HOURS

The normal working week consists of a minimum 37.5 hours (excluding any lunch and coffee breaks). At present, the hours followed are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Friday. However, the working hours for winter will be from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday to Friday (Monday, November 5 to Thursday, February 28). When, in the interest of the project and to meet urgent deadlines, a staff member may need to work beyond standard hours. Such work shall be governed by the Overtime provisions (Section 8.2) and shall not infringe upon the Right to Disconnect (Section 8.6). Staff are not expected to respond to non-urgent communications outside working hours.

Core hours for meetings: All institutional meetings, seminars, and decision-making bodies shall be scheduled strictly between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM to accommodate diverse working patterns and caregiving responsibilities. This core-hours requirement does not alter the total working hours expectation.

For the purpose of calculating partial month's salaries, compensations, and entitlement, a working month is counted as having 21.5 working days (172 hours). Working hours for part time employees shall be defined in their contract. When, in the interest of the project and to beat the deadlines, it will be necessary for a staff member to remain extra time on duty, he/she will be expected to do so willingly.

Working hours/holidays/weekends can be adjusted by the Project leaders, in the areas where working hours are disturbed occasionally due to natural disasters or other disturbances. Working days lost by disturbances should be compensated by working on weekends or holidays, immediately in the weeks following the lost working time. Except in cases of persistent disturbance, such lost time should be made up within one month.

8.2 OVERTIME

PRI staff may occasionally have to work longer office hours due to demands of work. Managers should make every effort to minimize any overtime work. However, occasional working of excess hours is regarded as a normal part of their regular duties.

PRI will normally compensate for additional hours worked through offering time-off in lieu (that is offering an equivalent amount of time off work/leave in accordance with the number of excess hours worked). This time-off should be utilized as soon as possible after the additional time has been worked and within the following 2 months. It cannot be allowed to accumulate beyond 37.5 hours.

In exceptional cases, where time-off is not a reasonable option, PRI will arrange for overtime payment to Assistant Level staff working overtime. Overtime of less than 1 hour will not be paid. Overtime will be paid at the rate of 150% of basic salary (without step and allowances) on an hourly pro-rata basis, only for Assistant Level staff.

8.3 STAFF ATTENDANCE

Each office of PRI shall maintain an attendance record indicating time of arrival and departure. It shall be the duty of each staff member to fill-in and sign the attendance record or a digital attendance system, every day. The attendance register will record leaves, travel, visit to training and other events.

Failure to sign-in the attendance system will be treated as unauthorized absence, unless adequately explained on a leave application form. The Managers or his/her designated person of each office shall review and authorize attendance records at the end of each week.

8.4 ABSENCE FROM DUTY

1. If staff are unable to report to work due to unavoidable circumstances, they should inform their supervisors as quickly as possible, on the same day before the working hours start.
2. It is the duty of the concerned supervisor to inform the HR manager of the absence of her staff.
3. Absence from duty shall require reasonable explanation and approval from the supervisor on the leave application form.

8.5 FLEXIBLE AND HYBRID WORKING

PRI recognizes that flexible and hybrid working arrangements can enhance productivity, wellbeing, and work-life balance. The following provisions apply to all staff, subject to operational requirements.

1. **Eligibility:** All regular staff who have completed their probation period may request hybrid or flexible working arrangements. Eligibility shall be determined based on role suitability and performance record.
2. **Minimum on-site requirement:** Staff approved for hybrid work shall normally be on-site for a minimum of three days per week, unless otherwise agreed with their manager.
3. **Application process:** Staff shall submit a written request to their manager, outlining the proposed arrangement. Approval requires the manager's endorsement and the BoD's sign-off.
4. **Equipment and connectivity:** Staff working remotely are responsible for ensuring they have adequate internet connectivity and a suitable workspace. PRI may provide equipment as budget permits.
5. **Data security:** Remote workers must comply with all data security and confidentiality obligations. Any breach arising from a remote work arrangement shall be subject to disciplinary action.
6. **Review:** All hybrid working arrangements shall be reviewed at least annually or upon a change of role or manager.
7. **Reversion:** The institute reserves the right to require full on-site attendance if business needs change.

Note: Hybrid workers must remain available during core hours (10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, per Section 8.1) on their remote working days.

8.6 RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

PRI is committed to supporting the work-life balance and mental wellbeing of its staff.

1. Employees have the right to disconnect from work-related communications outside their contracted working hours, during leave, and on weekends.
2. Managers and supervisors shall not penalize or negatively evaluate staff for not responding to non-urgent communications outside working hours.
3. Urgent communications must be clearly marked as such and limited to genuine emergencies.
4. Violations of this policy — including penalizing staff for disconnecting — shall be reported through the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (Section 9.6). Repeated violations by a manager constitute misconduct under Section 9.3.1.
5. This policy does not override the overtime or time-off-in-lieu provisions in Section 8.2.

9. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

PRI staff are obliged to comply with national and international laws, PRI policies, operating procedures, code of conducts, higher management decisions, staff rules and regulations, and other standards and codes of practice adopted by PRI. The employee is responsible and assumes liability for his/her own acts or omissions, and shall hold PRI harmless from any such liability. PRI is committed to honesty, integrity, transparency and non-discriminatory behavior in all its dealings. Therefore, it is essential that all staff conduct themselves to the highest standard possible.

9.1 DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

By accepting an appointment with PRI, the staff member agrees to work in a responsible, disciplined, harmonious, and productive manner, to be loyal to PRI and to act in a manner conducive to the accomplishment of PRI's objectives. She agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of PRI as stated in this manual and in any other lawful and reasonable instruction, written or verbal, given by the PRI. All PRI staff who violate the code of conduct and appropriate personal behavior face disciplinary actions according to the disciplinary guidelines stated below.

9.2 GOOD CONDUCT

Staff are expected to familiarize themselves with their specific project duties, and overall goals, strategies and objectives of PRI. Staff are expected to work in a disciplined way within the institute. They are expected to be loyal, to follow the institute policies, rules and working practices, to respect their supervisors and to follow the guidance or lawful instructions issued. Employees at all grades are also expected to demonstrate independence and initiative, to take responsibility and be accountable for their work, and its successes and failures. Should they be instructed to perform any tasks by their supervisor/In-charge which they consider wrong, damaging to the work or institute, illegal or dishonest, they must refuse to carry this out and report this to higher management or BoD.

Employees are also encouraged to suggest or introduce improvements in their work that will make it more effective and to be alert to the effective use of limited resources. Wherever possible, employees must make every effort to reduce waste or misuse of resources (of money, materials, time, and effort) and to ensure that the institute's limited resources are properly and effectively utilized. Employees at all levels are expected to protect the name, reputation and work of the PRI

and to defend the institute against unjust criticism. This includes the following specific actions; failure to respect will constitute misconduct and is liable to disciplinary action.

The employee shall not divulge any matters (either internally within PRI, or externally) of which he/she may become aware through his/her work and which are of a confidential nature. The employee shall not make statements, give interviews or submit articles, reports, stories or other information materials relating to the project operation, without the approval of the BoD. Employees shall not engage in any other professional activity, regardless whether paid or unpaid, without prior written approval of BoD.

9.3 EXAMPLES OF MISCONDUCT (BUT NOT LIMITED TO)

The examples of misconduct are intended to indicate behavior inconsistent with PRI's principles and they should not be understood as an exhaustive list of misconducts. The misconducts shall be classified as Misconduct and Gross Misconduct. The management shall decide disciplinary action depending upon the classification of misconduct. The following are some examples of Misconduct and Gross Misconduct but not limited thereto.

9.3.1 Misconduct Examples

1. Absence from duty without showing proper cause and/or without reporting the absence in a timely manner to the supervisor.
2. Inattention to observe official working-hours punctuality.
3. Failure to repay or justify advances or loans from PRI within the stipulated period of time.
4. Misusing institute assets for personal reasons such as computers, photocopiers or motorcycles/vehicles.
5. Breaching confidentiality within PRI.
6. Pretending to be ill.
7. Misuse of office supplies.
8. Failure to submit a leave application form on time.
9. Insubordination.

9.3.2 Gross Misconduct Examples

1. Fraudulent or flagrant misuse of PRI's funds, equipment, or materials.
2. Giving or accepting bribes or kickbacks in the form of money, services, gifts or discounts.
3. Engaging directly or indirectly in trade, commercial activity, other employment, or any other activity deemed a conflict of interest of PRI, without the prior written permission of the BoD.
4. Unauthorized disclosure of any confidential or classified information.
5. Publication to any person, group, or agency, any information or material relating to PRI or its work, without prior written authorization from the BoD.
6. Repeated insubordination.
7. Commission of any act subversive of discipline.
8. Physical violence.
9. Discrimination or harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, caste, color, nationality, creed, or age (see Section 9.5).

10. Repeated or frequent commission of misconduct.
11. Intentional damage to PRI property.
12. Criminal conviction.
13. Any action or statement which can result in or create a situation detrimental to PRI's work or reputation, outside or inside the place of work.
14. Unlawful manufacture, distribution, disposing, possession or use of controlled substances in the workplace.
15. Asking of personal favor by a senior staff using his/her position from a junior or subordinate staff in any kind.
16. Individual or group of staff intentionally creating an unfavorable working environment and spreading rumors without following grievance procedures.
17. Disclosing confidential information without the approval of BoD.
18. Obtaining confidential documents and materials without permission or authorization.
19. Repeated breaches of PRI code of conducts, policies, operating procedures.

9.4 MISCONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Where the conduct of the employee is deemed contrary to the code of conduct and employment contract and prejudicial to the aims and reputation of the project or institute; or where the performance or achievement of the staff is unsatisfactory, or employee is breaching PRI policies, the manager in-charge shall bring the matter to the attention of the higher management who will have the right to impose disciplinary action in consultation with respective manager in-charge.

The penalty for misconduct may be:

1. Issuing a verbal warning by the manager.
2. Issuing a written warning by the manager and notified to the HRM and the BoD.
3. Withholding of future increments and other benefits — letter to be issued by the BoD.
4. Suspension of employment — letter to be issued by BoD.
5. Termination of employment — letter to be issued by BoD.
6. If the misconduct is gross or serious in nature, prompt and strict action should be taken. The manager will bring the matter to the attention of HRM and BoD immediately with recommendation of disciplinary action against the employee concerned.

For minor misconduct and misdemeanors, an employee should, in the first instance, receive a verbal warning from the manager. The verbal warning must be recorded by the manager and kept in the employee's personal file. If the misconduct occurs again, or if other reasons arise to take disciplinary action, a written warning must be issued to the employee by the HRM (which must be carefully retained in the personnel file) in consultation with the respective manager. If an employee has received two written warnings, his/her service shall be reviewed by the manager and HRM and a recommendation made to the BoD as to whether to continue the employee's service and, if so, under what conditions.

Disciplinary Protocol for Harassment and Gender-Based Infractions: - Gender-based discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), and retaliation shall be treated as gross misconduct. - Upon substantiation of a complaint through the process in Section 9.5, the minimum penalty shall be a written warning and mandatory retraining. Depending on severity, penalties may include

suspension or immediate termination. - The HRM and BoD shall be informed within 48 hours of a substantiated complaint. - All disciplinary outcomes shall be documented in the employee's personal file.

9.5 DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT & GENDER EQUALITY

9.5.1 Zero-Tolerance Statement

PRI maintains a zero-tolerance stance on any form of harassment, discrimination, bullying, or intimidation. Sexual harassment, stalking, gender-based discrimination, cyber-harassment, and retaliation are explicitly prohibited. All allegations shall be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and dealt with confidentially. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of employment or legal referral.

9.5.2 Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Committee (ADAHC)

Any intentional or unintentional activities in the institute will be monitored closely by the "Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Committee (ADAHC)" appointed by the BoD — consisting of members from the groups most vulnerable to discrimination, sexual or other harassment or exploitation — to whom complaints can be made confidentially or anonymously anytime. In addition, a NextCloud App has been developed to anonymously report any discrimination, harassments, whistleblower, grievances, mental health, general concerns.

1. Currently, the members consist of:
 - Ms. Rajani Gautam (Female, Chair)
 - Mr. Rajiv Dhakal (Male, Individual with disabilities)
 - Mr. Uttam Nakarmi (Male, Individual traditionally considered lower caste)
2. The ADAHC committee shall, within two working days, initiate investigation.
3. The ADAHC shall provide their reports to the BoD, within 7 working days, providing their conclusions regarding:
 - a) whether the alleged complaints have occurred,
 - b) the severity of the discrimination or harassment,
 - c) whether it constitutes a misconduct, gross-misconduct or a criminal case,
 - d) recommendations for necessary actions according to this policy manual.

9.5.3 Gender Equality & Inclusion Officer

ADAHC will designate a **Gender Equality and Inclusion Officer (GEIO)**, who is responsible for:

1. Overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and biennial reporting of the Gender Equality Plan.
2. Reviewing sex/gender-disaggregated data and recommending corrective actions.
3. Advising the BoD on gender-equity policies, targets, and resource allocation.
4. Promoting inclusive practices across all institute activities.

The GEIO must be female and possess expertise or training in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (EDI) frameworks. Where specialized knowledge is required, external gender equality experts will be formally contracted.

9.5.4 Independent Confidential Reporting Channel

In addition to internal reporting channels NextCloud (ADAHC, GEO, supervisors, BoD), PRI may request an independent, secure, and confidential reporting channel for harassment and discrimination complaints, if there is a need. This channel may be managed by either:

- a) an external third-party service provider, or
- b) an autonomous compliance committee independent of line management (ADAHC being one).

Reports made through these channels shall be treated with strict confidentiality and without risk of retaliation.

9.6 GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM

PRI provides a formal procedure for staff to raise workplace concerns that are not covered by the Whistleblower (Chapter 13) or Harassment (Section 9.5) policies. Staff are encouraged to resolve issues informally with their supervisor first.

1. **Informal stage:** The employee should first discuss the grievance with their immediate supervisor or manager, who shall respond within 5 working days.
2. **Formal submission:** If the issue remains unresolved, the employee may submit a written grievance to the HRM, detailing the nature of the concern and steps already taken.
3. **Investigation:** The HRM, in consultation with the relevant manager, shall investigate the grievance and respond in writing within 10 working days.
4. **Appeal:** If dissatisfied with the outcome, the employee may appeal in writing to the BoD, whose decision shall be final.
5. **No retaliation:** No employee shall face retaliation for raising a grievance in good faith.
6. **Alternative route:** If the grievance involves the HRM directly, the employee may submit directly to the BoD.

10. STAFF TRANSITION

10.1 RESIGNATION (OF AN EMPLOYEE)

Any employee who intends to resign should submit his/her resignation in writing through the respective manager and HRM to BoD, stating the reasons (if any) for resignation and the effective resignation date. Staff at all levels must give a minimum of two-months' notice of resignation. Staff within the probation period can resign with 15 days' notice. No annual leave more than 5 days shall be taken after the resignation. If an employee fails to provide the minimum days' written notice of intention to resign from PRI, this may result in the staff forfeiting salary on a pro-rata basis.

1. Managers will recommend to BoD to accept notice of resignation submitted by an employee of all grades.
2. Acceptance of this resignation must be in the form of the standard letter. All benefits due to the resigning staff will be paid only after obtaining clearance certificates which require the employee to clear all outstanding dues or liabilities to PRI.
3. If any dues are not settled, PRI is entitled to deduct the amount owing from any final settlement, including the provident fund balance of the staff member.

4. A resigning employee is entitled to receive a letter of reference upon satisfactory settlement of all dues. Only the HRM in consultation with respective managers and the BoD are authorized to provide a letter of reference, which must be factual and accurate.

10.2 TEMPORARY DUTY ASSIGNMENTS (TDA)

Depending on the institute's need, staff may be required to take on responsibilities of some staff position or additional assignments. These responsibilities may be at a higher or lower level. A TDA assignment is not a promotion or a demotion. However, it is an opportunity for the staff to prove his/her competency and personal development. The maximum period of the TDA assignment will be three months.

10.3 ACTING ASSIGNMENT

PRI may appoint a staff to a higher-level vacant position temporarily as Acting or Officiating. Acting appointments must be approved by the BoD, who will do so on the recommendation of the HR Management. Acting appointment must not exceed three months, and it should not be considered as promotion. However, it is an opportunity for the staff to prove his/her competency and personal development.

10.4 TERMINATION (BY THE EMPLOYER)

Where, in the opinion of the BoD, respective managers, and HR management, satisfaction has not been given by an employee serving on initial contract, the employer may, at any time during the initial contract period (probation period), terminate the service of that employee by giving two weeks' notice.

The PRI BoD based on the recommendation from concerned managers, may terminate the service of a regular employee by giving one months' notice in writing, in the event of the following:

1. Reduction in the workload of the Project.
2. Untimely closure of a project.
3. Under-performance or under-achievement as determined by a process of evaluation.
4. Continued or recurrent ill-health or incapacity of the employee (including inability to move in the field to carry out their assigned duties).
5. Actual or expected reductions in a project.
6. In the case of an employee whose contract is terminated due to breach of contract and misconduct/violation of discipline, the PRI BoD reserves the right to waive the regular notice period, or salary in lieu of notice, or gratuity payment.

10.5 DISMISSAL

Staff can be dismissed on any of the following grounds:

1. **Disciplinary action:** Staff can be dismissed on disciplinary grounds according to the procedures and actions outlined in this manual. Recovery from the concerned staff shall be made where possible in cases of fraud, misuse of funds, breaching PRI code of conducts, or the stealing of, or willful damage of PRI assets or property. PRI will not give any advance notice of dismissal to the concerned employee.
2. **Poor Performance:** Staff can also be dismissed on the ground of poor performance.

3. **Conviction in any criminal case:** If a staff member has been found to have been convicted by a competent court of law, s/he shall be dismissed from the service.
4. **Death:**
 - a) In case of death of a staff member, the contract is considered null and void from the date of death. However, all legal or contractual obligations of the staff and PRI to each other will be taken stock of and appropriate actions will be taken to ensure that all matters are settled within three months of the death notice.
 - b) The nominated beneficiary as mentioned in the personal information sheet will be entitled to all accrued benefits due to the staff.

10.6 SUCCESSION PLANNING

PRI is committed to institutional continuity by ensuring that critical knowledge, skills, and responsibilities are transferred when key staff depart or transition to new roles.

1. **Critical roles:** The BoD, in consultation with the HRM and respective managers, shall identify and maintain a register of critical roles (e.g., Principal Investigators, Lab Managers, Finance Officers).
2. **Documentation:** Holders of critical roles shall maintain up-to-date documentation of key processes, procedures, and institutional knowledge.
3. **Notice-period handover:** Staff in critical roles serving notice shall dedicate a minimum of two weeks to knowledge transfer and handover to their successor or interim appointee.
4. **Interim coverage:** Where a critical role becomes vacant, the BoD shall, within two weeks, appoint an interim officer and initiate recruitment or internal reallocation.
5. **Cross-training:** Managers are encouraged to cross-train team members on essential functions to minimize single-point-of-failure risks.

11. SALARY, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS

The provisions of this chapter apply to all employees of the institute irrespective of the nature of employment, unless otherwise stated. Employees contracted for a fixed period or for a specific project will receive allowances according to their contract, which will be aligned with the following policies as much as possible. The following, however, applies only to Regular appointment employees unless explicitly stated otherwise.

11.1 GRADING SYSTEM AND SALARY STRUCTURE OF PRI

The grade and salary structure for employment in PRI will closely follow the grade structure from lowest 1 to highest 13 as per Nepal Government's Health Services sector definitions (see Table 11.1), as circulated from time to time by Nepal Government's Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Table 11.1: Grading system at PRI shall follow Nepal Government's Health Services sector definitions				
Levels & grades for Nepal Government Civil Service (Health sector)				
S No	Post	Rank	Grades	PRI Rank
1	Officer	12	2	13

Table 11.1: Grading system at PRI shall follow Nepal Government's Health Services sector definitions

2		11	3	12
3		10	4	11
4		9	4	10
5		8	4	9
6		7	5	8
7		6	5	7
8		5	5	6
9	Assistant	5	6	5
10		4	7	4
11		3	7	3
12		2	7	2
13		1	10	1

The grades and salaries for research project staff will be differentiated for a project due to the different job market landscape in the country as explained below.

11.1.1 Grading System for Research Project Staff

There is a lack of research personnel in Nepal; hence, in order to attract scientists who are working in developed countries, and to retain them in Nepal, the research staff for specific projects, if allocated in the project, are paid with a top-up that will compete with the salaries in developed countries where researchers tend to migrate.

When planning for a research project, allocated salaries for different grades and steps for a scientist involved in a research project should be at least the minimum salary set by the UK's University and Colleges Union (UCU) HE Single Pay Spine (see https://www.ucu.org.uk/he_singlepayspine), as per Table 11.2 below.

Table 11.2: PRI rank, corresponding minimum qualifications and salaries for research staff

PRI Rank	Research Project Staff UK UCU Spine Point		Minimum qualifications for Research Staff			
	Start SP	End SP	Roles	h-index*	Degree	Experience
13	50	51	Professorial Research Fellow	25	PhD	10Y, PI
12	48	49	Principal Research Fellow	20	PhD	7Y, PI
11	45	47		15	PhD	5Y, PI
10	42	44	Senior Research Fellow	10	PhD	5Y, PI

Table 11.2: PRI rank, corresponding minimum qualifications and salaries for research staff

9	39	41	Research Fellow	8	PhD	5Y, co-I
8	35	38	Research Associate	5	PhD	3Y
7	31	34		2	PhD	2Y
6	27	30		2	MS	2Y
5	3	26	Research Assistant	1	MS	1Y
4	8	22		1	BS	3Y
3	1	17		0	BS	1Y
2	8	17	Lab Technician	0	Dip/BS	5Y
1	1	7	Lab Assistant	0	Dip/BS	2Y

* Web-of-Science; normalized to specific field, if necessary; First, lead, or corresponding author in same number of papers in WoS indexed journal

Research staff are paid with salaries as per table above only if there is a directly allocated budget from a research grant, as determined by the documents of the specific project the staff is involved in, and explicitly mentioned in the employment and project contract.

11.1.2 Grading System for Administrative and non-research Staff

Salaries and allowances of the different grades of non-research staff are aligned with, whenever possible, the local job market rate, the minimum standard set by the Nepal Government's MoF. Following is the grading system, roles and minimum qualifications for non-research staff.

PRI Rank	Min qualifications for Administrative and non research staff		
	Admin Role	Degree	Experience
13	Chief executive	PhD/Mas	8Y/15Y
12	Dy Chief Exe.	Masters	10Y
11	Chief officers	Masters	10Y
10	Dy. Chiefs	Masters	8Y
9	Sr. Executive	Masters	5Y
8	Executive	Bachelors	10Y
7	Officer	Masters	7Y
6		Bachelors	7Y
5	Office Assistant	Masters	3Y
4		Bachelors	5Y
3		Bachelors	3Y
2		HS	7Y

PRI Rank	Min qualifications for Administrative and non research staff		
1	Office support	HS	3Y

11.1.3 Performance Review/Annual Increment (Step Increment)

All regular staff with satisfactory performance review are eligible for annual step increment.

The performance appraisal system within PRI has been developed for setting employee performance objectives, monitoring the achievement of the objectives, staff supervision and coaching for further development of staff competencies in needful areas, and thus improving the effectiveness of PRI's interventions.

The performance appraisal system is to motivate the staff for better performance and enhancing his/her performance capacity through better skills and knowledge, better work environment and better institute support.

A staff participatory performance review (Annex I) is conducted for the 12-month period from January 1st to December 31 each year. PPR (participatory performance review) will be conducted in December every year. This assessment will be the main basis for deciding the step increment. PPRs are required for all staff except for those who have not completed the probation period by the end of December 31. The final PPR of all employees has to reach HRM by the mid of November every year.

Staff who have not performed satisfactorily over the course of the previous year will not receive any increment/time scale increment. Managers conduct the assessment of their respective staff on their overall performance, including sincerity, commitment to the institute — over the past year and should submit recommendations as to which staff should and which staff should not receive any yearly increment.

If the performance of the staff is assessed as satisfactory, an increment of one step will normally be provided in salary effective from 1 January. Similarly, if the performance of the employee is assessed as excellent or extraordinarily good, an increment of two steps will be provided. However, it will be finally decided by the BoD. Normally, the number of staff receiving a two steps increment will not exceed 10% of all staff. Staff who received a written warning during the review period will not be entitled for any step increment. Employees whose contribution is considered outstanding may be entitled to have their step/grade reviewed. If a case can be made, such deserving cases must be referred with justification to the BoD, by the respective manager.

11.1.4 Loan and Advances

Loans will not be granted against salary. Employees can seek loans against their provident fund balance that is kept with Employees Provident Fund Nepal, Thamel, as per their policy of the retirement fund scheme. However, only in the case of any real emergency, employees may apply for a maximum advance of 3 months' basic salary. The application of this advance may exceptionally be granted at the discretion of the BoD in consultation with the respective Manager and the finance department. Such an advance will be settled within the same fiscal year. No such further advance will be entertained until the previous advance has been settled in full.

11.2 ALLOWANCES

11.2.1 Medical and Accidental Insurance

All employees and volunteers will be covered under the accidental and medical insurance taken by PRI.

11.2.2 Transportation Allowance

PRI Volunteers or employees under requirement to travel regularly for official tasks, are paid for their Transportation and Maintenance of their vehicles on actual cost basis. Monthly regular allowance not exceeding Rs 5,000 may be considered on as per need. Staff taking official pick-up and drop-off will not be entitled for transportation allowance.

11.2.3 Communication Allowance

All employees are eligible for communication allowance or reimbursement of maximum Rs 500 per month, if the employees have an official requirement to communicate to the third parties and be accessible over and above regular office hours.

11.2.4 Work-Related Travel Allowances and Reimbursement

Work-related travel allowances are provided to specified staff to meet expenses incurred in carrying out their duties or in moving from place to place as a result of their work. The travel order form must be approved before the actual commencement of travel. The staff should submit a travel expenses report within 7 days upon return to his/her office from the trip. The travel settlement should be supported by a travel report in the prescribed format of PRI.

The travel cost is reimbursed, at actual expenses made, upon submission of the proof-of-payment, provided that the most economical mode of travel and expenses occur, and the expenses are made within the allocated pre-approved budget for the travel.

If it is more effective for the staff to stay with their friends or relatives instead of the most economical mode of commercial accommodation and sustenance in an official travel, the staff may request reimbursement for gifts and groceries to the relevant friends/relatives not exceeding seventy five percent of the potential cost of the most economical commercial mode of accommodation and sustenance during such stay. Such purchases must be justified and pre-approved before travel.

11.2.5 Retention Allowance

To address the difficulties with the staff retention (and brain drain), if the staff agrees to sign an Employment Bond for 2 years, a Retention Allowance of up to 60% of the basic salary (as per Government rate as stipulated in Section 11.1), may be provided to a regular employee as per recommendation of the immediate supervisor/s and decision of BoD. If an employee leaves before the bond period ends, they will be required to pay back the Retention Allowance to PRI, and will forfeit the income taxes paid against the allowance. Project staff are bound by the project specific contract and will not receive Retention Allowance.

11.3 OTHER BENEFITS

11.3.1 Accident Insurance Policy

Employees are insured 24 hours per day under the group personal accident insurance plan taken out with an insurance company. The maximum sum insured is as follows: All grades: NPR. 700,000/- (seven hundred thousand).

In the case of death by natural causes, the employee's beneficiaries (as declared in the personal history form) will receive a sum of NPR. 700,000.00 (seven hundred thousand) in addition to the other benefits received from group personal accident insurance. In the case of death of an employee either by accident or natural cause, the employee's beneficiaries will receive NPR. 50,000/- (fifty thousand) as funeral expenses that include transportation.

11.3.2 Festival Bonus

Festival allowance is paid normally at the time of Dashain festival. All regular contract employees will receive this festival expenses allowance equal to one-month basic salary + step, if 12 months of service has been completed, or receives this allowance on a pro-rata basis if the service period is less than 12 months. Considering the cultural and religious diversity among the staff in the institute, staff members may utilize this festival expenses allowance based on their own religious festival, but this must be brought in advance to the attention of the HRM. Employees leaving the service of PRI before the respective festivals will not be entitled to the festival expenses. Income tax will be deducted as per Nepal Government Rule.

11.3.3 Provident Fund

Membership in the Employees Provident Fund Nepal, Thamel retirement fund scheme will only be open to employees having completed the initial probation period of employment. All contract Employees of PRI must join the retirement fund scheme with Employees Provident Fund Nepal, Thamel. The provident fund is intended to build up personal savings for the staff which can be drawn upon in future to meet emergencies and other needs. Provident fund contributions from PRI will be calculated as per the law of the country.

Provident fund for short-term contract employees is highly encouraged and will be calculated in consultation with the concerned employees.

11.3.4 Taxes

All staff are responsible for paying their taxes. As per the government rule of deducting income tax at source, PRI will deduct income tax from the total taxable income of the staff received from the PRI and deposit the same in the GoN Tax Office on their behalf. It is the responsibility of the staff member for the final assessment of tax from the Tax Office.

11.4 GENDER PAY EQUITY AUDITS

The Institute shall conduct an annual Gender Pay Gap Audit to identify any unexplained wage disparities between genders within equivalent job classifications and grades. The audit shall cover: - Base salary, allowances, and bonuses by gender and grade - Representation of women and men across salary quartiles - Recruitment starting salaries by gender

Results shall be reported to the BoD and the Gender Equality Officer. Any unexplained disparities shall be remedied through salary adjustments within the following budget cycle. Summary findings shall be included in the biennial Gender Monitoring Report (see Section 11.5).

11.5 GEP BUDGET AND DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION

11.5.1 Dedicated GEP Budget

A dedicated, recurring budget line item shall be allocated annually within the core institutional operating budget to fund Gender Equality Plan actions, including but not limited to: external consulting, training resources, awareness-raising campaigns, gender-equity audit tools, and the operation of the Gender Equality & Inclusion Committee.

11.5.2 Sex/Gender-Disaggregated Data Collection

The Human Resources and Administrative departments shall collect sex/gender-disaggregated data annually, covering: - Total workforce distribution by job category, salary band, and contract type (permanent vs. temporary) - Recruitment metrics (applicants, shortlisted candidates, and final hires by gender) - Promotion rates and career progression vectors by gender - Training participation rates by gender

11.5.3 Biennial Gender Monitoring Report

The Gender Equality Officer shall compile an institutional Gender Monitoring Report every two years. This report shall: - Outline progress against established targets - Be presented to top management (BoD) - Be published on the institute's public website - Feed into the next cycle of the Gender Equality Plan

11.6 LEAVE PROVISIONS

Phutung Research Institute encourages employees to enjoy time away from work. The leave policy of the Institute has been established to achieve healthy, stress free and productive staff. For calculation of leave accounts, "year" shall mean the first day of January and ending on the last day of December of the next year. Employees must apply at least 2 days' prior approval to supervisor for any leave, except for sick leave. For sick leave, employees can have verbal approval and post-facto approval sought upon the resumption of work with proper evidence of the sickness. There is no such provision to carry forward any unused leave into the next year. The provisions of this section apply to all employees of the institute irrespective of the nature of the employment.

11.7 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

All regular contract staff of PRI will be entitled to a maximum of 13 days' leave per calendar year with pay for the celebration of national and religious holidays. The selection of these holidays will be made prior to the start of each calendar year as a result of consultation with staff in each project. In the interest of uniformity, PRI will strive to standardize as far as possible the list of public holidays to be observed by PRI. Considering the cultural and religious diversification, festival leave provisions shall be decided at the staff meeting and inform the HRM, who then will prepare a consolidated/common list for submission to the BoD within December.

11.7A Religious and Cultural Accommodation

PRI respects the religious and cultural diversity of its staff. In addition to the public holiday provisions above:

1. Staff may request reasonable accommodation for daily prayer times during working hours. Such requests shall be discussed with the manager and shall not unduly disrupt operations.
2. Staff may request variation from the standard dress code for religious or cultural reasons, provided that safety requirements (Chapter 6) are met.
3. Dietary accommodations for institute-provided meals or events shall be made available upon advance request.
4. Staff who observe religious festivals not included in the public holiday list may request to use one or more of their annual leave days for those occasions, and such requests shall normally be approved.

11.8 ANNUAL LEAVE

All contract staff are entitled to Annual (or Earned) Leave with full pay, which is calculated on the basis of 1 day for each calendar month of work.

1. Staff must seek prior approval to proceed on leave from the respective manager normally by giving at least 7 days' notice. In exceptional emergency circumstances, an employee may be allowed to proceed on leave at shorter notice but this still needs to receive approval from the concerned manager. Staff are fully responsible for informing the concerned manager if there will be any delay in returning from leave and, in the case of emergencies, for seeking approval to extend. Employees who fail to inform will be subject to disciplinary action, as this will be considered unauthorized absence from duties.
2. The minimum length of leave is half day.
3. Provided that it is convenient for the demands of the project, staff may be permitted an advance leave (that is to use up part or all of their full year's entitlement early during the same calendar year). However, this must be cleared by the end of the same calendar year. Staff are not permitted to draw forward future expected leave provision from the following year.
4. Staff are expected and actively encouraged to utilize their permitted annual leave during the year in question, but must plan their leave in consultation with the respective Manager. The Staff and Supervisor must ensure that the work is not much hampered by staff leave. Staff therefore may be asked to take leave at certain periods, or reschedule their annual leave in the interests of the work.
5. A maximum of 6 days' annual leave can be carried forward to the next calendar year. Any untaken days in excess of 6 days will be forfeited (lost).
6. Staff in special cases for example study, sickness of closed family members (spouse, parents, children), training can take the annual leave days in advance for exceeding the leave entitlement of a current calendar year. However, if such advance leave could not be recovered by the time a member of staff leaves PRI, it will adjust it as leave without pay (LWOP) during the time of clearance.
7. PRI will not allow encashment of accumulated annual leave days to staff during the service period. However, staff or their designated beneficiaries, upon availability of funds and upon approval of BoD, may obtain encashment of a maximum of 24 days, provided that staff are separated for one of the following reasons:

- Resignation
- Death
- Unexpected Termination
- Retirement

In no case shall reimbursement for Annual Leave be offered to:

- Staff under Probation
- Staff dismissed for misconduct

Records of annual leave shall be maintained for each employee by the HRM. The scheduling of annual leave for each staff will be agreed in consultation with the Project Coordinator/BoD. Each Project is encouraged to make a leave plan to include in the annual leave of all staff, at the beginning of each calendar year.

11.9 SICK LEAVE

1. Employees when sick, shall be entitled to a maximum of twelve days of sick leave per annum, with full pay, taken minimum one day at a time.
2. Maximum 6 days unused sick leave days may be accumulated during the service period.
3. No encashment (or payment) for untaken sick leave is permitted.
4. In cases where the illness exceeds 12 days per year and no balance of sick leave days remain, the employee is expected to utilize their annual leave entitlement to cover the extra working days lost. In cases of prolonged illness, PRI will also permit a subsequent period of absence from work on the basis of leave without pay (see below). Cases of prolonged illness should be reported to the BoD for consideration. Sick leave cannot be applied in advance, if the employee is not really sick.
5. For any sick leave of two or more continuous days, a doctor's certificate is required.

11.10 MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION LEAVE

11.10.1 Maternity Leave

Women employees following confirmation of service after a successful probation period shall be entitled to 52 working days' maternity leave, for two children only, during the whole employment period in PRI. The woman employee should notify the Supervisor at least one month in advance, approximately when this leave will be taken. Employees will be eligible to take half day leave without pay for a maximum period of one month immediately after the maternity leave.

A pregnant staff member should not work more than the normal work hours per week, i.e. more than 37.5 hours. The staff member who is on maternity leave shall not be asked to perform any of her official duties. Breastfeeding mothers are permitted time off of one hour per day, for the first six months after the birth of the child. It has to be approved by BoD with recommendation of the concerned manager.

11.10.2 Paternity Leave

Men employees following confirmation of service shall be entitled to 10 working days Paternity Leave for two children only. Leave can be taken anytime during the pregnancy of their legal spouse

or up to 2 months following the delivery of the child. The leave arrangements must be made with the concerned manager and approved by the BoD.

11.10.3 Adoption Leave

Employees who adopt a child shall be entitled to adoption leave of 15 working days with full pay for the primary caregiver, and 5 working days for the secondary caregiver, for up to two children. The employee must submit the adoption certificate or equivalent legal documentation. This leave may be taken within six months of the adoption date.

11.10.4 Documentation

Both women and men employees must submit the child's birth certificate or adoption documentation upon the birth or adoption of the child.

11.11 MOURNING LEAVE

Employees shall be entitled up to 13 (thirteen) continuous days of compassionate leave in the death of a member of his/her immediate family members (spouse, parents and children). For married female staff, parents-in-law are considered her immediate family. During the death of grandparents, brother and sister leave for up to 5 days may be provided. The compassionate leave can be taken any time during the period of mourning and funeral ceremony as per the tradition of the concerned staff.

11.12 LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

In special deserving cases, employees of PRI may be entitled to apply for leave without pay. Such applications may be considered for staff who are suffering from extended illness or injury, or who wish to complete a program of study, or whose personal/family circumstances require them to seek time away from work. Normally, leave without pay is only considered after all annual and/or Sick Leave entitlement has been exhausted. Approval of applications for leave without pay will not be automatic and will be considered and approved only in deserving cases.

Employees may apply for a maximum of one month's leave without pay. This requires a written request to be submitted at least one month in advance to the HRM through the respective manager. Leave without pay for a longer period will be permitted only for educational purposes and requires a written application to be submitted at least three months in advance. Each request requires the approval of the BoD. Managers in consultation with HRM can approve up to 5 days per occasion. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that such leave does not disrupt work schedules of the project or program.

Staff whose application to proceed on leave without pay is approved, are not entitled to any other remuneration or benefits, but their accident insurance for maximum three months shall continue during the period of leave without pay.

11.13 SABBATICAL LEAVE

PRI recognizes the value of extended professional development for its research staff. Sabbatical leave provisions apply to regular research staff who have completed at least five (5) years of continuous service.

1. **Duration:** Sabbatical leave may be granted for a period of up to six (6) months with full pay, or up to twelve (12) months with half pay.

2. **Purpose:** Sabbaticals are intended for advanced study, writing grant proposals, conducting collaborative research at another institution, or completing a major scholarly work.
3. **Application:** Staff must submit a written proposal to the BoD through their manager at least three (3) months in advance, detailing the purpose, location, and expected outcomes.
4. **Obligation:** Upon return, the staff member is expected to remain with PRI for at least one (1) year. Failure to do so may result in repayment of sabbatical-related costs on a pro-rata basis.
5. **Reporting:** Within one month of return, the staff member shall submit a report to the BoD summarizing the outcomes of the sabbatical.
6. **Limit:** No more than two (2) staff members may be on sabbatical leave simultaneously, subject to operational needs.

12. STAFF TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

At the time of recruitment, the selection committee must recruit only those staff who are already trained, competent and capable to effectively perform duties in the specified position. This same requirement is applicable in case of promotion to a higher position or transfer to a similar position. However, as the environment of work constantly changes due to many factors e.g. changed needs, policies, rules, procedures, priorities, new fields of work, expectations of project, new knowledge available etc., the staff of PRI have to keep themselves abreast of the new and emerging requirements and make themselves competent, capacitated and capable to meet the needs of the day. In order to achieve this, PRI will strive to take staff capacity building initiatives by organizing essential training courses, workshops, orientations, coaching, exchange programs, exposure visits etc. Similarly, the staff members are expected to take all initiatives on their own and be proactive to acquire new knowledge and skills from various sources in order to remain good for the position that one holds.

12.1 STAFF INDUCTION

After recruitment, all staff will undergo a thorough orientation in PRI Office, strategy, project documents, policies, rules, guidelines, systems, procedures, dos & don'ts and code of conduct. This orientation will be arranged by the respective manager and the HRM.

While planning for staff training, priority should be in the following order: (a) In-project, on-the-job informal training; (b) Project objective-oriented in-house formal training with continuous follow-up; (c) Short, relevant training at other organizations, but in the country.

12.2 TRAINING

12.2.1 In-project Training Within PRI Program

The respective manager is responsible for coordinating in-project training for staff as follows, in consultation with the HRM: 1. Identification of project needs, deficiencies of necessary skills and knowledge among staff to meet those project needs and determine specific training needs of staff; 2. Preparation of the annual staff training plan; 3. Preparation of proposals for training courses; 4. Preparation of training materials and manuals; 5. Monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up of training organized.

12.2.2 In-Country Training Outside the Institute

Specific training needs vary from staff to staff depending upon the nature of work and it is not always possible to organize all training within each project. Thus, PRI staff may be sent out to other organizations for training, if such training has direct relevance to the professional field of the staff and will improve his/her job performance. The opportunity for this type of training will be provided based on the following priority ranking: - Needs of the project; - Dedication and work performance of the individual staff; - Ability to utilize new learning; - Years of service.

12.2.3 Workshops/Seminars/Study Visits/Exchange Visits

Participation in these activities is also considered staff training, as they provide an opportunity to share and learn with people in the global context.

12.2.4 Training Outside Nepal

Non-availability of a specific training course in Nepal will be the major factor for arranging training outside Nepal. This opportunity will be limited due to cost, and efforts are made to find relevant training institutions globally. The course length is limited to a maximum of three months, with the assumption that absence from the project for more than three months necessitates the appointment of a replacement staff person to cover the work. While in-project level training is organized by the projects in consultation with HRM, the training outside Nepal will be organized by the respective manager in consultation with HRM and with written prior approval from the BoD.

Employees sent for training outside Nepal will have demonstrated: - Commitment to PRI; - High standards of job performance; - Capability to transfer the knowledge gained on the course to other staff in the Project.

Above criteria will also apply for training opportunities funded and sponsored by another collaborating partner of PRI.

12.2.5 Academic Courses

PRI generally cannot support staff for academic courses. This refers to both financial support as well as special leave other than that to which the employee is normally entitled to. PRI has no objection to employees undertaking further academic study by correspondence, as long as such study does not interfere with the employees work performance. Depending on the Human Resources Development plan as approved by the BoD, PRI may partially support the course if it is directly related to work.

PRI shall not take any responsibility whatsoever for any training course that is arranged and pursued by the staff member in his/her own personal capacity without prior approval and involvement of PRI.

12.2.6 Eligibility for Per Diem, Travel Cost during Training

Since training is intended to benefit both the institute/partner institute and the individual staff member/partner staff involved, and since the staff member or partner's staff already receives salary (as well as allowances), PRI does not provide any additional financial benefit in the form of per diem expenses or other allowances to staff attending training. Staff who participate in training organized by PRI and training organized by other organizations are not entitled to receive per-diem expenses or any other allowance during the training period.

However, the staff traveling from their working place to the place of training shall be entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses, at actual expenses made, upon submission of the proof-of-payment, provided that the most economical mode of travel and expenses have occurred, and the expenses are made within the allocated budget for the travel.

Dropping out from the training without express approval from the respective management and the BoD is not allowed. Legal or administrative action may be taken including the refund of the investment made for the training against the staff who drops out without prior written approval.

12.2.7 Training Contribution and Bond Arrangement

Training and related human resource development activities are considered as necessary to develop the skills and knowledge of staff in order to perform their work with PRI more effectively and capably. However, training and related activities also offer an opportunity for the staff to develop themselves and their careers by acquiring new experience, skills and knowledge. Training and related activities thus serve the needs of both institute and individual staff.

In order to recognize this, PRI has put in place a Training Bond. Bond arrangement is primarily intended for training and related activities abroad but this may also apply to extended training inside Nepal. Under this arrangement PRI may contribute to the costs involved in sending any staff on training or related activities. This includes training fees, lodging, travel but also releasing staff on full pay to undergo training. So, staff should also make a time bond as per bond policy below.

12.2.8 Training Bond (Commitment to Continued Service)

Since training represents an investment in staff development, PRI would expect improved services for a certain minimum period of time from the staff following the training. If they leave earlier, then they will be liable to refund the training cost, travel cost and any other cost on a pro-rata basis. This will be applicable for the training more than thirty days abroad. The same shall be applied for in-country training for 2 or more months. This may be deducted from the final settlement or if necessary, recovered from provident fund or gratuity. This will be applicable to partner's staff as well under a special agreement signed between PRI and implementing partner.

Training Bond commitment from staff must be agreed and signed by the staff members before he/she proceeds on training. If they do not agree to these terms, then the training offer may either be dropped or offered to another deserving staff, depending on the need of the institute. If staff do agree, they will be expected to sign a legal document committing themselves to this arrangement. This document has legal authority and the terms and conditions will be enforced.

12.2.9 Monitoring and Evaluation of Staff Development and Training Activities

A staff member who participated in a training/workshop within and outside the institute must submit a training report within five working days following return. The report is to be submitted to his/her direct supervisor, with a copy to concerned unit heads and HRM.

Staff work plan: The direct supervisor should monitor the work plan of the staff member as stated in his/her training report and document the progress as input for the staff performance review.

12.2.10 Mandatory Gender Equality & Unconscious Bias Training

All executive leadership, department heads, hiring panel members, and performance evaluators must complete mandatory training on implicit gender bias and structural inequality. No individual may chair a recruitment or promotion panel without completing this training.

General awareness workshops on inclusive language, workplace safety, and microaggression awareness shall be integrated into the annual training calendar for all staff members.

Methodology workshops on incorporating sex/gender variables into experimental designs, clinical cohorts, and socio-economic research models shall be offered to principal investigators and research staff on an annual basis.

12.3 EXECUTIVE MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE

PRI shall establish an institutional mentorship program that pairs mid-career female and minority researchers/professionals with senior institutional executives to support leadership succession pipelines and address underrepresentation in senior roles.

1. **Eligibility:** Mid-career staff (PRI Rank 6 and above) from underrepresented groups may apply or be nominated.
2. **Duration:** Mentorship pairs shall commit to a minimum of one year, with meetings at least quarterly.
3. **Selection:** The Gender Equality Officer and HRM shall oversee pairings, with approval from the BoD.
4. **Review:** Progress shall be reviewed annually by the HRM and the Gender Equality Officer, with outcomes reported to the BoD.

12.4 PROMOTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

PRI recognizes that clear and transparent promotion criteria are essential for career development and retention.

1. **Eligibility:** A staff member is eligible for promotion to the next grade after a minimum of three (3) years of service at the current grade, subject to satisfactory performance and demonstrated competence.
2. **Criteria:** Promotion decisions shall consider:
 - Performance appraisal (PPR) scores over the preceding three years
 - Demonstrated leadership, initiative, and impact within the institute
 - For research staff: publications, grants secured, and research outputs
 - For administrative staff: process improvements, efficiency gains, and supervisory capability
3. **Process:**
 - Self-nomination or manager nomination
 - Review by a Promotion Committee comprising the HRM, relevant manager, and one external member appointed by the BoD
 - Recommendation to the BoD for final approval
4. **No automatic promotion:** Fulfilling the minimum eligibility does not guarantee promotion. The decision is based on merit and institutional needs.
5. **Appeals:** A staff member may appeal a promotion decision through the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (Section 9.6).

12.5 CONFERENCE TRAVEL AND PUBLICATION SUPPORT

PRI supports the dissemination of research outputs by its staff.

1. **Conference travel:** Regular research staff may apply for financial support to attend national or international conferences where they are presenting original work. Support covers registration, travel, and accommodation up to a limit set annually by the BoD.
2. **Open-access publication:** PRI may contribute toward open-access publication fees for research outputs arising from work conducted at the institute, subject to budget availability and approval from the project manager and BoD.
3. **Application:** Staff must submit a written request at least four (4) weeks before the conference or submission deadline, with justification and estimated costs.
4. **Acknowledgement:** All publications and presentations supported by PRI must acknowledge the institute.

13. WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

This policy is intended to encourage staff to report — within the institute — any suspected or actual occurrences of illegal, unethical or inappropriate events (behaviors or practices) without retribution. The reporting staff, the Whistleblower, is required to report those cases within the institute system, except for case (7) below.

1. The Whistleblower should promptly report the suspected or actual event to his/her immediate supervisor.
2. If the Whistleblower would be uncomfortable or otherwise reluctant to report to his/her supervisor, then the Whistleblower could report the event to the higher level of management, including the Disciplinary Committee or to the Board of Directors.
3. **Independent confidential channel:** In addition to internal reporting channels, the Institute maintains an independent, secure, and confidential reporting channel managed by either an external third-party service provider or an autonomous compliance committee independent of line management. Reports made through this channel shall be treated with strict confidentiality and without risk of retaliation. This channel is accessible via the institute website and intranet.
4. The Whistleblower can report the event with his/her identity or anonymously.
5. The Whistleblower shall receive no retaliation or retribution for a report that was provided in good faith — that was not done primarily with malice. However, a Whistleblower who makes a report without good faith is subject to disciplinary action, including termination.
6. Anyone who retaliates against the Whistleblower — who reported an event in good faith — will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of employee status.
7. Criminal activities, such as assault, rape, burglary, etc. as defined by the law, should immediately be reported to local law enforcement.
8. Supervisors, who receive the reports must promptly act to investigate and/or resolve the issue.
9. The Whistleblowers shall receive a report within five working days of the initial report, regarding the investigation, disposition or resolution of the issue.

10. The identity of the Whistleblower, if known, shall remain confidential to those persons directly involved in applying this policy, unless the issue is investigated by law enforcement, in which case members of the institute are subject to subpoena.

14. RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

Phutung Research Institute's Policy and Procedures governing Integrity of the Research conducted within the institute have been developed to emphasize the importance of integrity, ethics and rigor in all research activities. The policy encourages openness, respects and protects intellectual property, regulates the use of data and equipment, encourages publication of research results, conforms with prevalent ethical practices and punishes misconduct in research. The policy aims to ensure all research is carried out responsibly, abiding by the law and in accordance with current best practices of ethics and integrity. It is the responsibility of all researchers in PRI to ensure that they adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and to the highest level of ethical standards set out by national and international regulatory bodies, professional and regulatory research guidance and research ethics frameworks. Violation of this policy is considered as Misconduct in Research, and subject to disciplinary action.

14.1 General guiding principles

1. Researchers should be aware of and follow the legal requirements and institute guidelines that regulate their work.
2. Researchers should be mindful of the ethical issues that relate to their work.
3. Researchers should actively consider any risks that their research might generate outcomes that could be misused.
4. Researchers should keep unambiguous and accurate records of their research.
5. Researchers should declare potential conflicts of interest relating to their research.
6. Researchers should properly acknowledge the contributions of colleagues, collaborators, and all others who directly assist or indirectly support their research.
7. Researchers should share research data and analysis, as well as other resources that they produce, as widely, as openly, and as rapidly as possible.
8. Researchers should always be truthful and responsible for their own actions pertaining to the research activities, including but not limited to, laboratory safety, research ethics, maintaining research records, communicating research outcomes, and critically assessing others' research.

14.2 RESEARCH DATA

Research data shall be managed to the highest standards throughout the research data lifecycle as part of the PRI's commitment to: research excellence, integrity of our research data, highest ethical standards, and responsibility towards the global scientific community.

Data should be generated using sound techniques and processes, and accurately recorded in accordance with best possible research practices.

1. Data generated at the institute should be shared and disseminated as rapidly as possible (except when there is sound reason to delay such dissemination for Intellectual Property protection), publicly or via a managed access procedure (when this is necessary to protect

confidentiality and the privacy of research participants, or to respect the terms of their consent).

2. All research data must be managed and curated effectively throughout its lifecycle to ensure integrity, security and quality and where possible to support new research and research data sharing.
3. Data stored locally on a computer should be backed-up in a local data bank, local server which is further backed up in the cloud (PRI has 2TB of pcloud, please ask for it).
4. Electronic files containing personal data or the data from our collaboration partners (where permissions to share the data is not provided by the partner), should be encrypted or password protected and access to them should be limited to as few people as possible.
5. The scientific results obtained from the institute's R&D activities must be disseminated to the public as rapidly as possible except when:
 - a) there is a reason to delay such dissemination for Intellectual Property protection, data validation,
 - b) it is necessary to protect confidentiality and the privacy of research participants, or to respect the terms of their consent.

14.3 ETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

This Policy conforms with the national research ethics framework and the internationally accepted ethical standards. Research conducted within the Institute must comply with relevant legal, regulatory, professional and ethical requirements and standards. The policy further illustrates that all research carried out by the PRI researcher or on PRI premises, involving human participation or personal data, is undertaken in a way that safeguards the dignity, rights, health, safety, and privacy of those involved.

The PRI recognizes that ethical issues raised by research vary across disciplines and that the institute will necessarily have differing approaches to ethical review. Set out below are the guiding principles that the PRI expects its researchers to abide by; subject-specific guidance must be obtained by researchers.

1. Harm or burden to those involved in or affected by research must be minimized in all instances and all participants must be warned in advance about any potential risks of harm, however slight these might seem.
2. Researchers are required to consider the ethical risk of any procedure within a research project which involves human participants or personal data, consulting with the project manager, Principal Investigator and PRI policies and personnel, before any work is undertaken. Advice must be sought in case of doubt.
3. Researchers should be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers. This applies to the whole range of research work, including experimental design, generating and analyzing data, applying for funding, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others.
4. Confidentiality of information given by participants, and the anonymity of subjects, must be respected at all times and documentation protected accordingly.
5. **Gender dimension in research:** A mandatory "Gender Dimension Screening Checklist" shall be integrated into the internal project approval workflow for all advanced research grant proposals (including Horizon Europe applications). The checklist shall assess whether

biological sex and socio-cultural gender factors have been considered in the research design, methodology, and data analysis plan.

14.4 RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Research integrity is active adherence to the ethical principles and professional standards essential for the responsible practice of research. Moreover, adoption and practices of such principles as a personal credo, not simply accepting them as impositions by rule-makers. These practices include:

14.4.1 *Honesty*

Honesty in all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; in reporting on research methods and procedures; gathering data; in using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and in conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.

14.4.2 *Rigor*

In line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards: in performing research and using appropriate methods; in adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; in drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and in communicating the results.

14.4.3 *Transparency and open communication*

In declaring conflicts of interest; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data; in making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and in presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.

14.4.4 *Care and respect*

For all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations. These core elements of research integrity are the values through which trust and confidence in research stem, and from which the value benefits of research flow. PRI conforms to all ethics, legal and professional obligations incumbent on their work.

14.5 MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH

The PRI is committed to ensuring that allegations of misconduct in research are investigated with all possible thoroughness and vigor. PRI considers the following action as Misconduct in Research:

1. **Fabrication:** Creating research data without actual methodological measurement.
2. **Falsification:** Manipulating research processes or changing or omitting data without valid and scientific justification.
3. **Plagiarism:** Using other people's material without giving proper credit. Taking the intellectual property of others, perhaps as a result of reviewing someone else's article or manuscript, or grant application and proceeding with the idea as your own.
4. **Failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations:** For instance, failure to declare competing interests; misrepresentation of involvement or authorship; misrepresentation of interests; breach of confidentiality; lack of informed consent; misuse of personal data; and

abuse of research subjects or materials, negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research.

5. **Mishandling of Scientific Equipment:** Mostly, lab equipment is costly and sensitive and needs proper handling and care. Careless and unseemly handling of such materials is also considered as Misconduct in Research.

Any allegations of research misconduct will be investigated in the strictest confidence. All those who are involved in the procedures for investigating an allegation, including witnesses, representatives and persons providing information, evidence and/or advice, have a duty to maintain strict confidentiality.

14.6 RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

If there is uncertainty about whether misconduct has occurred or is occurring, the individual who suspects the matter should discuss it with the project manager or Principal Investigator, who in consultation with the Research Ethics and Scientific Disciplinary Committee and the BoD, will decide whether or not the matter requires further investigation. For further inquiry of the issue, The Committee will undergo the investigation procedure and prepare the final report within a week of completion of the investigation. If any form of Misconduct in Research is noticed, the Committee and BoD will decide the form of disciplinary action.

Misconduct in this context does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct (including gross misconduct) unrelated to the research process.

15. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR) POLICY

15.1 Ownership of Intellectual Property

1. Any intellectual property (IP) created by employees, trainees, or interns in the course of their employment or engagement with PRI shall vest in PRI, unless otherwise agreed in writing.
2. IP includes but is not limited to: inventions, patents, copyrights, designs, databases, software, algorithms, laboratory protocols, know-how, and research data.
3. Creators shall be recognized as inventors or authors in accordance with applicable IP law and internationally accepted practices.

15.2 Disclosure and Recording

1. Staff who create potentially patentable IP must disclose it promptly to their supervisors BoD using the prescribed Invention Disclosure Form.
2. PRI shall maintain a central IP register documenting all disclosures, patent filings, and licensing agreements.

15.3 Revenue Sharing

1. Where IP developed at PRI generates revenue through licensing, commercialization, or other means, the revenue can be shared between the institute and the creator(s) as per specific agreement between the inventor(s) and PRI. In absence of such agreement, PRI reserves the right to the revenues generated.

2. The BoD shall decide on distribution among multiple creators in proportion to their contributions.

15.4 Handling of IP by Interns and Students

1. Interns and students shall assign all IP created during their engagement to PRI.
2. Where an intern or student uses their own pre-existing IP, this must be declared in writing at the outset.

15.5 Third-Party IP

Staff must respect third-party IP rights and ensure that no third-party IP is used without appropriate licenses or permissions.

16. RESEARCH OUTPUTS AND AUTHORSHIP POLICY

16.1 Authorship Criteria

Authorship on publications arising from work conducted at PRI shall follow the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) or equivalent disciplinary standards:

1. Substantial contributions to conception, design, data acquisition, or analysis;
2. Drafting or critically revising the work;
3. Final approval of the version to be published;
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work. All four criteria must be met. Contributors who do not meet all criteria shall be acknowledged in the acknowledgements section.

16.2 Corresponding Authorship

For research primarily conducted at PRI, a PRI-affiliated researcher shall normally serve as corresponding author. Where multiple institutes are involved, this may be negotiated among collaborators.

16.3 Acknowledgement of the Institute

All publications, presentations, and other research outputs arising from work conducted at PRI must acknowledge the institute using the standard affiliation format: "Phutung Research Institute, Tarakeshwar 7, Kathmandu, Nepal."

16.4 Dispute Resolution

Authorship disputes shall be referred to the Research Ethics Committee (Section 14.6), whose decision shall be final.

16.5 Open Access

PRI encourages staff to publish in open-access venues where possible, subject to the availability of publication funds (Section 12.5).

17. DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY POLICY

17.1 Scope

This policy governs the collection, storage, processing, and sharing of personal data of staff, interns, volunteers, and research participants. It supplements the research data provisions in Section 14.2.

17.2 Principles

PRI shall adhere to the following data protection principles:

1. **Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency:** Personal data shall be collected for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes.
2. **Purpose limitation:** Data shall not be further processed in a manner incompatible with those purposes.
3. **Data minimization:** Only data that is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary shall be collected.
4. **Accuracy:** Personal data shall be kept accurate and up to date.
5. **Storage limitation:** Data shall be retained no longer than necessary.
6. **Integrity and confidentiality:** Data shall be processed securely against unauthorized access, loss, or damage.

17.3 Staff Personal Data

1. The Personal Information Sheet (Annex II) collects data necessary for employment administration. Staff must provide accurate data and update it as changes occur.
2. Personal data shall be stored in locked cabinets or password-protected electronic systems, accessible only to HRM and authorized personnel.
3. Staff may request access to their personal data and request corrections.
4. Personal data shall not be shared with third parties without the staff member's consent, except where required by law.

17.4 Research Participant Data

Research participant data shall be handled in accordance with Section 14.3 (Ethical Research Practice) and any applicable ethics committee approvals.

17.5 Data Breach

Any suspected or actual data breach must be reported immediately to the HRM and BoD. PRI shall take prompt corrective action and, where required, notify affected individuals and regulatory authorities.

18. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

18.1 Commitment

PRI is committed to promoting the mental health and wellbeing of all staff. The institute recognizes that research and administrative environments can be high-pressure and that proactive support is essential for a healthy workforce.

18.2 Support Mechanisms

1. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** PRI shall provide access to a confidential counselling service for staff experiencing personal or work-related distress.
2. **Mental health days:** Staff may utilize up to three (3) working days per year as mental health leave, drawn from their sick leave entitlement, without requiring a medical certificate for a single day.
3. **Manager training:** Managers shall receive training on recognizing signs of mental distress and referring staff to appropriate support.
4. **Workload review:** Any staff member experiencing persistent stress or burnout may request a workload review with their manager and HRM.

18.3 Confidentiality

All disclosures related to mental health shall be treated confidentially and shared only on a need-to-know basis with the staff member's consent.

18.4 Anti-Stigma

PRI is committed to reducing stigma around mental health. Open conversations about mental wellbeing are encouraged, and no staff member shall face discrimination for seeking support.

ANNEX I: PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE REVIEW (PPR) FORM

The performance and achievements of an institute primarily depend on its staff's behavior, performance and achievements. It is therefore extremely important that the staff performance review is conducted at least once in a year with all seriousness. Staff yearly salary review (if any) shall primarily depend on satisfactory performance of the staff as documented in the PPR.

In order to manage performance of staff in an efficient and effective manner, timely participatory performance review is essential, first by the immediate supervisor, then by the project manager together with the immediate supervisor before submission to the BoD through the HRD. The purposes of PPR are:

1. To improve performance and effectiveness of staff by providing an opportunity to supervisors to underline strengths as well as points that need to be improved,
2. To review staff performance and his/her achievements during the period under review in line with the work-plan.
3. To recognize and document initiatives and abilities of staff,
4. To create time and space in which staff can have a say regarding project/program's work plan,
5. To promote better, more open and more frank communication between the supervisor and subordinate.

Performance management should be a continuous process. Supervisors are strongly advised to carry out this discussion yearly in January. An annual step increment, exposure, training etc. is based among others on the performance review. In case of interns and thesis students, this will determine the marks or recommendations to be provided by the institute.

A. Personal Details:

Name of the staff (Staff ID): Current Grade & Step: Designation: Review Period: From: to:

B. Discussion points:

B.1. Please rate your overall experience in the past year between 1 and 10. Provide a few words to help us understand your rating?

Rating: | |

Explanation: | |

B.2. As per our institutional policy, all our scientists (including interns and students) must learn to work independently after an initial learning curve of a few months with limited supervision. Please rate your independence from 1 to 10. Please briefly explain what needs to be done in order to enhance your ability to work independently.

Learning experience: | |

Needs: | |

B.3. From 1 to 10 how do you rate your own performance, in terms of what has been assigned to you and what you have achieved? Explain

Your own rating of your performance: Rating from your peers (anonymous): Rating from your immediate supervisor/s: Rating from the project manager:

Explanation: | |

C. Strength and Weakness:

C.1. Strength/Achievement Staff according to jobs assigned and accomplished

SN	Major Responsibilities	Outcomes/Achievements	Area for Improvement

C.2. Please rate your a) work/effort b) punctuality and c) regularity in the institute from 1 to 10.

a) work/effort	b) punctuality	c) regularity
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C.3. What do you consider to be your most important achievements of this year and why?

C.4. Shortcomings/Weakness

C.5. Warnings received during this year

Verbal: Written: If received, on ground of:

D. Review of Task performance:

D.1. Please mention what areas of your tasks that you have not accomplished yet, if any, please give reasons.

- What elements of your job do you find most difficult and why?
- What element of your job interests you the most and why?
- In your view, which element of your task you find not best suited to your current position?
- Are you performing any other task which you think is not suitable for you? Please specify if any.

Training/Exposure:

List down below all programs; such as, training/workshop/seminar/conference of 2 or more days within the country and irrespective of the day/s outside country you have attended during the year:

S.No	Name of the program	Location	From	To

Key Learning from Training/Exposure

Action Plan on how you will utilize Training/Exposure

Achievement/Implementation Training/Exposure

E. Future Plans:

What are your plans in the institute for the coming year? Please identify one supervisor in the institute who you want to work with, discuss and agree with him/her.

S.No	Action Plan	Specific Outcomes	Supervisor

List down Program Plans stating specific Outcomes/Achievements/Results during the next 12 months:

Personal Development Plan:

What sort of training/experiences would benefit you in the next year? Not just job-skills but also your natural strengths & personal passion you would like to develop — you and your work can benefit from these:

S.No	Course Name/Type	Expected Improvement

What action could be taken to improve your performance in your current position by you, and your supervisor?

F. Signatories:

F.1. Agreed Upon:

Name and Signature of Employee:

Date:

F.2. Comment from the immediate Supervisor/s.

Name and sign of Immediate Supervisor:

Date:

F.3. Comment from the immediate project manager.

Name and sign of Immediate Manager:

Date:

HRD Purpose only:

ANNEX II: PERSONAL INFORMATION SHEET

(to be filled by the concerned staff, along with their CV, and relevant documents e.g. academic, citizenship certificates, etc.)

CONFIDENTIAL

1. Name:
2. Sex (M/F/Other):
3. Blood Group:
4. Nationality:
5. Date of Birth:
6. Permanent Address:
7. Current Address:
8. Phone No:
9. Marital Status:
 - a) If married, full name of Spouse:
10. Mother's Name:
11. Father's Name:
12. Grandfather's Name:
13. Do you have any relatives in PRI? Yes/No
 - a) "If Yes" State:
 - i. Name/s:
 - ii. Relationship/s:
14. Dependents
 - a) Name:
 - b) Date of Birth:
 - c) Relationship:
 - d) Name:
 - e) Date of Birth:
 - f) Relationship:
 - g) Name:
 - h) Date of Birth:
 - i) Relationship:
15. Have you ever been convicted in a Court of Law? Yes/No
 - a) If yes provide details:

Voluntary Gender/Equity Monitoring (for GEP reporting purposes):

This section is voluntary and will be used only for anonymized statistical reporting as required by the Gender Equality Plan. It will not affect your employment in any way.

- Gender identity: ☐ Woman ☐ Man ☐ Non-binary / Other ☐ Prefer not to say
- Do you identify as a person with a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say
- Ethnicity / Caste group (optional):

Legal Heir

In the event of my death or incapacitation while serving with PRI, I hereby nominate the following beneficiary to all benefits and monies due to me at the date of separation from PRI:

PRIMARY Name of Beneficiary:

Sex:

Date of Birth:

Relation:

SECONDARY Name of Beneficiary:

Sex:

Date of Birth:

Relation:

I hereby declare that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am aware that any deliberate falsification of the information results in disciplinary action if such information is detected anytime during my tenure with Phutung Research Institute.

Signature of Staff:

Date:

ANNEX III: EXIT INTERVIEW

Staff ID: Name: Position: Separation Date:

1. What caused you to consider leaving your present job in PRI Nepal?
2. What part of your present job in PRI you like best and why?
3. What was the most difficult situation you faced in PRI?
4. What do you consider the greatest achievement in PRI and what were the supporting factors?
5. Would you give your comments on the strength of PRI?
6. Would you give your comments on the areas that PRI need to improve?
7. Any special remarks/ Notes?

.....

Signature Outgoing Staff:

Date

.....

Signature HRM

Date