

Awareness Communication: Due Diligence in Research Collaboration

Academic Year 2026 – 2027

Date: Sunday, September 20, 2026

To: All KFUPM Faculty, Researchers, and Students

cc: KFUPM President, Vice President for Research and Innovation, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans, Department Chairmen, Center Directors

The Deanship of Research would like to raise awareness regarding the importance of exercising appropriate due diligence when establishing research collaborations, in support of maintaining the highest standards of research ethics, integrity, and the credibility of the academic record.

Responsible Selection of Research Collaborators

Members of the KFUPM research community are encouraged to exercise due diligence when selecting faculty members, researchers, co-authors, or external partners for research collaboration. Careful selection of collaborators is an important aspect of responsible research conduct and helps safeguard the quality, credibility, and integrity of research outcomes.

Before initiating or confirming a research collaboration, faculty members and researchers are encouraged to **carefully assess the quality of prospective collaborators' previous research and consider their alignment with appropriate standards of research integrity and ethical conduct**. As part of this assessment, researchers may review publication records through **Scopus or Web of Science** and examine whether previous publications have been subject to retractions, corrections, errata, or corrigenda, including the reasons for such actions where available.

Researchers may also consult other relevant publicly available sources, including **PubPeer, Crossref, the Retraction Watch Database, and official journal or publisher records**, for information that may warrant further consideration.

Researchers are particularly encouraged to be attentive to:

- Retractions or withdrawn publications and, where available, the reasons for such actions
- Corrections, errata, corrigenda, or significant amendments to published work
- Expressions of concern issued by journals or publishers
- Substantive concerns or discussions regarding previous publications
- Other relevant publication-integrity or research-ethics concerns

Particular attention should be given to retractions associated with research misconduct, such as data fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism, as these may represent significant concerns when assessing prospective collaborations. Retractions resulting from honest errors should be considered in their appropriate context and may not, by themselves, indicate concerns regarding a researcher's integrity or future conduct.

The presence of comments or discussions on PubPeer or similar platforms should **not, by itself, be considered conclusive evidence of research misconduct**. Any information identified should be carefully reviewed and, where appropriate, verified against reliable sources, including official journal or publisher records, before conclusions are drawn.

Researchers should also ensure that prospective collaborators and co-authors uphold appropriate standards of research integrity, accountability, ethical conduct, data accuracy, originality, and responsible authorship. All authors should make appropriate scholarly contributions, receive proper credit, and remain accountable for their respective contributions to the research.

The University highly appreciates the research efforts and contributions of its faculty and researchers and anticipates the cooperation of all concerned in maintaining the highest standards of research quality, ethics, and integrity. Thank you.

Further Reading

- Zhang, Q., Abraham, J. & Fu, HZ. Collaboration and its influence on retraction based on retracted publications during 1978–2017. *Scientometrics* **125**, 213–232 (2020).
- Tang, L., Hu, G., Sui, Y. et al. Retraction: The “Other Face” of Research Collaboration? *Sci Eng Ethics* **26**, 1681–1708 (2020).
- Marco-Cuenca, G., Salvador-Oliván, J.A. & Arquero-Avilés, R. Fraud in scientific publications in the European Union. An analysis through their retractions. *Scientometrics* **126**, 5143–5164 (2021).

For more information, please feel free to reach out ORE@kfupm.edu.sa.