

Policy on Commercialization of Research

Category: Research Policy

Approval: Board of Governors

Responsibility: Vice President, Research and Innovation

Date: March 24, 2023

Definitions:

Intellectual Property: The Trent University Faculty Association’s Collective Agreement (TUFA-CA) defines “intellectual property” as “any result of intellectual or artistic activity, regardless of format”. Intellectual property is protected by law; in Canada this includes patents, copyright, industrial designs, trademarks, and trade secrets. Notwithstanding this protection, much of the research conducted at the University is freely shared by researchers to advance knowledge and serve the public by contributing to basic science, informing public policy and debate, and/or contributing to the intellectual commons.

Commercialization: Commercialization is the process undertaken to introduce intellectual property to the general market.

Purpose/Reason for Policy:

The purpose of this Policy is to define the approach to generating, protecting and commercializing Intellectual Property (IP) with regard to research conducted at Trent University (the University).

Scope of this Policy:

This Policy applies to all Intellectual Property generated through research conducted at, or under the auspices of, the University involving University personnel, students, premises, resources, services, facilities, and/or equipment.

Policy Statement:

1. A Commitment to the Management and Protection of Intellectual Property (IP)

- 1.1. It is the policy of Trent University to cultivate, manage, and protect Intellectual Property in a manner that supports commercialization, innovation (social and/or technological), and entrepreneurship by researchers at the University.
- 1.2. All members of the University community must abide by Trent University’s intellectual property policies and respect the intellectual property rights of others.

- 1.3. IP is researcher owned, unless otherwise specified.
- 1.4. For faculty researchers, IP is outlined in Article IX of the TUFA-CA.
- 1.5. For graduate students, IP is outlined in the *Guidelines for Use of and Ownership of Intellectual Property Developed by the Graduate Students at Trent University*.

2. Defined Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities pertaining to the Policy are defined in three categories:

2.1. Researchers

- 2.1.1. Researchers who wish to commercialize innovative ideas must inform the Office of Research and Innovation, both to avail themselves of assistance and in recognition of the University's first option to carry out the development of intellectual property towards commercialization.
- 2.1.2. Researchers may enter into contractual agreements, such as with supervisors, the University, corporate sponsors, or other third parties, which may grant or determine Intellectual Property rights. Any such pre-existing contract shall govern ownership rights.
- 2.1.3. Student researchers are strongly encouraged to discuss any potential Intellectual Property issues with their supervisors and to make the appropriate agreements in advance concerning ownership of Intellectual Property. Researchers have the right to publish their inventions *subject to contractual agreements*, acknowledging that publication may be a bar to future protection of intellectual property.

2.2. Office of Research and Innovation

- 2.2.1. The Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) is the primary administrative department responsible for the provision of services to researchers.
- 2.2.2. The ORI provides resources and support for research and knowledge mobilization activities and provides the services and supports necessary for the cultivation, management, and commercialization of IP at Trent University.
- 2.2.3. The ORI evaluates newly disclosed intellectual property and inventions and advises on matters of protection, confidentiality, commercialization, licensing, entrepreneurship, and public disclosure.

2.2.4. Where the University chooses to exercise their first option to commercialize, the ORI assists with the effective protection (such as patenting) and transfer of Trent University researcher innovations to industry and/or community partners where these discoveries can be developed for public use and benefit, through licensing or start-up/spin-off companies, on a case-by-case basis.

3. Commitment to Increase Intellectual Property Capacity Through Programming and Education

- 3.1. Education for students and faculty on the benefits and risks of IP disclosure, data management, and commercialization are prioritized at the University through the Office of Research and Innovation and the Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Centre.
- 3.2. Through a combination of workshops, customized training, online resources, entrepreneurial skills training, and facilitated access to community and industry partners, the University is committed to offering the resources to support this priority.
- 3.3. Researchers will have access to information and resources that are relevant to the different pathways that may be followed depending on the particular context of, and market for, the specific intellectual property.
- 3.4. Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Centre
 - 3.4.1. The Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Centre (ESIC) provides information, education, programming, and support for innovation (social and/or technological), entrepreneurship activities, and entrepreneurial skills development.
 - 3.4.2. Through ESIC, the University offers programming, seminars, workshops, and information sessions to increase awareness and capacity related to IP, including on the risks and benefits of IP disclosure of commercialization.
 - 3.4.3. ESIC supports the creation and implementation of new start-up companies for the commercialization of intellectual property, including in instances when a suitable licensee cannot be located, or when it makes sense from an economic or community development point of view. Additionally, ESIC provides a pathway to other connected community resources to assist with start-up and scaling of spinoff, spinout, or new entrepreneurial ventures.

- 3.4.4. For students, ESIC also delivers the programming for student entrepreneurs wishing to pursue entrepreneurship as the means to commercialization of their IP. ESIC offers students an entry point to connection with other community resources, such as incubators.

3.5. The types of IP education include:

Education on the potential benefits and risks of IP disclosure, data management, and commercialization, including online resources:

- [Intellectual Property Course](#)
 - [Knowledge Management](#)
 - [MaRS Toolkit](#)
 - [Government of Canada's directive on safeguarding research](#)
- Workshops and other customized training sessions on IP cultivation, management, and protection
 - Information sessions on IP protection, including patents
 - Access to community and industry partners, to connect researchers to external partners for the purposes of innovation and the commercialization of IP
 - A pipeline for innovation, entrepreneurship, and skills training for students, staff, and faculty
 - Pitch competitions, hackathons, and other events to foster connections and promote training
 - Access to entrepreneurial skills training and start-up support

- 3.6. The University, through the Office of Research and Innovation, provides access to government supports including bodies such as [Intellectual Property Ontario \(IPON\)](#) and the [Ontario Centre of Innovation \(OCI\)](#).

4. Invention Disclosure

- 4.1. Faculty members, graduate students, and research assistants have an obligation to disclose new IP that is developed with the use or support of university resources; however, researchers have no obligation to seek intellectual property protection.
- 4.2. When IP is believed to exist, researchers can complete a preliminary disclosure to the ORI.

- 4.3. In recognition of the University's right to share in revenue, when IP is known to have been created using the University's resources, researchers shall disclose the IP through a formal invention disclosure.
- 4.4. For faculty members, disclosure is outlined in Article IX of the TUFA-CA, which states that there will be a joint committee established to negotiate issues related to the disclosure of intellectual property, the responsibilities of the Employer and/or members regarding demonstration of the use of the Employer's services or facilities and the proportionality of shared revenues based on a schedule of resources used and accrued interest, within the life of the agreement.
- 4.5. For graduate students, disclosure is outlined in the *Guidelines for Use of and Ownership of Intellectual Property Developed by the Graduate Students at Trent University*, including information about disclosure to the supervisor and to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

5. Providing Net benefit to Ontario

- 5.1. Trent University recognizes its potential to serve the public interest by having some of our research stimulate commercial economic activity.
- 5.2. Trent University is committed to making reasonable efforts to maximize the benefit to Ontario when IP is created using the University's resources.
- 5.3. Benefit to Ontario may take the form of:
 - Social and/or economic value generated for the people of Ontario, the Ontario economy and/or the Ontario innovation ecosystem
 - Funding and training of students and development of highly-qualified personnel
 - Supporting social innovation, entrepreneurship, and start-ups in Peterborough, the Kawarthas, and the Eastern GTA
 - Commercialization of IP within Ontario
 - Industry partnership or collaboration within Ontario
 - Negotiation of licensing agreements for the purpose of commercialization

6. Institutional Engagement with the Innovation Ecosystem

- 6.1. The University, through the Office of Research and Innovation and the Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Centre, works with its partners and collaborators to accelerate commercialization and to leverage expertise and resources. This is done by connecting researchers with various organizations, collaborators, and industry partners within the region to create opportunities for Trent's faculty, staff, and students.

6.2. Trent's Innovation Ecosystem includes:

- [Cleantech Commons](#)
- [Durham Regional Technology Development Site](#)
- [EaRTH District](#)
- [Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Centre](#)
- [Fleming College - Office of Applied Research and Innovation](#)
- [Innovation Cluster – Peterborough and the Kawarthas](#)
- [Intellectual Property Ontario](#)
- Government partners
- [Invest Durham](#)
- [Invest PTBO](#)
- [Office of Research and Innovation](#)
- [Ontario Centre of Innovation](#)
- [Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network](#)
- [Spark Centre](#)
- [Trent Community Research Centre](#)

Contact Officer:

Senior Director, Office of Research and Innovation

Date for Next Review:

May 2026

Related Policies, Procedures & Guidelines:

- a) Guidelines for Preliminary Intellectual Property Disclosure
- b) Guidelines for Invention Disclosure
- c) Guidelines for Intellectual Property Assignment
- d) Trent University Policy on Research and Scholarly Misconduct
- e) Trent University Conflict of Interest Policy (Human Resources)
- f) Guidelines for Funded Research Agreements
- g) School of Graduate Studies Guidelines for Intellectual Property Developed by Graduate Students

Policies Superseded by This Policy:

N/A