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Definitions, abbreviations, and policies

NHREC: *National Health Research Ethics Council*

CUT: *Central University of Technology*

DoH: *Department of Health*

FRIC: *Faculty Research Integrity Committee*

NHA: *National Health Act*

REC: *Research Ethics Committee*

SoP: *Standard Operating Procedures*

ToR: *Terms of Reference*

URIC: *University Research Integrity Council*

Confidentiality: *The responsibility to protect information entrusted to researchers for research purposes from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, modification, loss of theft*

Conflict of Interest: *Incompatibility of duties, responsibilities, or interests (personal or professional) of a person or an institution as regards ethical conduct of research so that one cannot be fulfilled without compromising another.*

Ethics review: *Review of research proposals or protocols by RECs prior to commencement of the research*

Research: *Includes a range of activities conducted by many different disciplines that may use different methodologies and explanatory frameworks to extend knowledge through disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation*

Research Project: *Refers to any project that parties may undertake that involves research or teaching activities, and in respect of which a researcher will submit a research proposal to obtain ethical clearance to undertake such research. This includes, but is not limited to, any publication pursuant to the research activities conducted*

Risk: *Function of the magnitude of harm and the probability that it will occur*

Relevant Policies:

Department of Health (DoH), 2015: *Ethics in Health Research – Principles, Processes and Structures*

Singapore Statement on Research Integrity

CUT Research and Integrity Framework

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, General Guidelines for Research Ethics (2014)

Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology (2015)

Terms of Reference: Publications and Integrity

ARIN Newsletter

ASSAf- Code of Conduct for Researchers

POPIA Act

1. Introduction

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Central University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (CUT HREC) are aligned with the university's policy on Research Ethics. As mandated by the National Health Act, 63 of 2003, universities must establish Research Ethics Committee's (REC), and the research projects must undergo prior ethics review by a National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) registered ethics committee. The establishment, functioning and continued registration of REC's with NHREC is governed by HREC.

2. Research Ethics Structure

The Research ethics within the University is guided by CUT's ethics Standard Operating Procedures and managed by the CUT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). HREC reports to the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) and is mandated to provide broad leadership on matters of research ethics and performs an oversight function of the four Faculty Research Innovation Committee's (FRIC's) research ethics activities. HREC is the advisory and governing committee of research ethics.

3. CUT HREC Objectives and Functioning

3.1 The CUT HREC's general functions are to advise URIC on issue pertaining to research ethics and to finalise matters related to research ethics on behalf of URIC and govern and coordinate research ethics committees. The jurisdiction and functioning of the HREC are determined in accordance with these Terms of Reference (ToR) as well as the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) approved and adopted by URIC.

3.2 URIC contributes towards promoting the university's reputation as research driven institution and an important role-player in research, and it ensures that research development opportunities and possibilities are created and maintained.

3.3 One of CUT's main objectives is to promote ethically sound research. To achieve and maintain this objective, strategies and structures should be implemented to ensure that:

3.3.1 *Ethical standards of practice in research conduct, as prescribed by the relevant acts, regulations, standards, and guidelines applicable to the specific REC, are maintained.*

- 3.3.2 *Research participants, the environment, animals, and researchers are protected from harm and exploitation.*
- 3.3.3 *The research is sound and scientifically acceptable, and systems promoting and supporting research, are in place.*
- 3.4 **The HREC's purposes include, but are not limited to:**
- 3.4.1 *Advising the URIC on research-related policy issues and issues pertaining to the general control function of the committee.*
- 3.4.2 *Ensuring the effective functioning and coordination of the REC's and the FRIC'S in ethics related matters.*
- 3.4.3 *Acting as an advisory and governance structure of the FRIC's for research ethics related matters.*
- 3.4.4 *Acting as an appeal and advisory board tasked to hear complaints and issue recommendations.*

4. **HREC Authority**

HREC, as mandated by URIC has the authority to action the following:

- 4.1 To develop appropriate research ethics and integrity policies that comply with national and international regulations and forms for the ethical conduct of research.
- 4.2 To oversee the implementation and compliance with the university's research ethics and policy in all the research activities undertaken by the university.
- 4.3 To establish procedures to ensure research ethics, and alter when appropriate, the structure, composition, and function of the research ethics committees and to approve the appointment of members to these committee.
- 4.4 To put a procedure in place, according to acceptable norms and standards, for dealing with appeals, or research on a topic of a secret or criminal nature.
- 4.5 To facilitate training and capacity building on research ethics and related issues, and
- 4.6 To coordinate, monitor and evaluate the integrity of research ethics in all research activities undertaken by the university.

5. HREC Member Composition

Research ethics at CUT is managed by the HREC and the FRIC's. The HREC reports to the URIC and is mandated to provide broad leadership on research ethics and oversight function of the four FRICs. The composition and functions of the HREC must meet the minimum standards and requirements, as set out in the Department of Health (2015) Ethics in health research: Principles, structures, and processes.

Members should have the appropriate qualifications and experience to evaluate the ethical aspects of research. The HREC membership should be independent, interfaculty-oriented, and multidisciplinary.

5.1 The HREC is composed of the following members.

5.1.1 *Chairperson*

5.1.2 *Deputy Chairperson*

5.1.3 *Administrator/Coordinator to administrate the ethics processes*

5.1.4 *Healthcare (such as medical practitioner, psychologist, social worker, or nurse)*

5.1.5 *Experience in qualitative research methodologies*

5.1.6 *Experience in quantitative research methodologies*

5.1.7 *Expertise in statistics*

5.1.8 *Expertise in research ethics*

5.1.9 *Legally qualified member*

5.2.0 *Laypersons*

5.2 Where appropriate, HREC may enquire assistance from experts provided they do not have any conflict of interest.

5.3 URIC ratifies of all HREC members. Members must sign a nondisclosure agreement to ensure that knowledge and information obtained by HREC members remains confidential.

6. Election Procedure

Once there is a vacancy, HREC will notify the reviewers of the vacancy to serve on the HREC. Faculties will also be notified of the vacant position and are

welcome to nominate individuals to serve on the committee. The following process will then take place:

- 6.1.1 *HREC will request for the nominated member to accept nomination.*
- 6.1.2 *HREC will vote on whether they accept or do not accept the nomination.*
- 6.1.3 *If the member accepts nomination, a recommendation will be made to URIC.*
- 6.1.4 *If approved by URIC, member will sign a non-disclosure form and become a member of the HREC.*

7. Office Terms

A member is appointed to serve a 3-year term from the date of appointment.

- 7.1.1 A member may be re-elected at the end of their term.
- 7.1.2 A member may not serve more than 3 consecutive 3-year terms.
- 7.1.3 A member may resign and subsequently be replaced by the nominating entity to serve the remaining time of the vacancy created by the departing member.
- 7.1.4 If a member fails to attend 4 consecutive scheduled meetings without tendering an apology, HREC has the right to terminate their membership.
- 7.1.5 HREC may nominate and select a new member to replace a member who has resigned or had their membership terminated.

8. Meetings and Reporting

- 8.1 HREC will meet on a monthly basis each year.
- 8.2 With the Chairpersons authority, special meetings may be scheduled if required.
- 8.3 All documents for discussion at a meeting must be submitted to the REC administrator/coordinator 14 working days before the scheduled meeting.
- 8.4 The REC administrator will distribute the minutes and agenda of the meeting at least a week (5 working days) before the meeting.
- 8.5 HREC will submit annual reports to URIC on the operations of the committee and FRIC.

9. **Committee Meeting Procedures**

HREC will determine its own meeting procedures with due observance of the accepted norms of fair administrative process and generally accepted principles for conducting meetings.

10. **Decision-Making**

10.1 HREC may take a decision by at least 50 % of the members present at duly constituted meeting voting in favour of the matter at hand when consensus cannot be reached.

10.2 When voting, 50% of the committee plus one (1) constitutes quorum for purposes of decision-making.

10.3 Each member (excluding the chairperson) has one (1) vote. The chairperson of HREC is entitled to a casting vote.

10.4 Advisors or Observers to the HREC are not allowed to vote on any matters.

10.5 The secretariat may not vote on any matter.

11. **Secretariat**

The Administrator / Coordinator to administrate of the HREC is responsible for the secretarial services.