University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

TITLE: Inter-Faculty Research Ethics Committee TERMS OF REFERENCE			
AUTHOR(S): Dean of Research; Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs			
IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY: Dean of Research; Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs			
STRUCTURE APPROVED BY: Senate			
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COMPLIANCE OVERSIGHT BY: University Research Ethics Committee			
TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FOLLOWING Documents: • University Research Ethics Policy; • University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) Terms of Reference • University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and Inter-Faculty Research Ethics Committee (IFREC) Standard Operating Procedures			

APPROVED BY:

Name: Prof Buhlungu
DESIGNATION: Vice Chancellor/ Chair of Senate
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

15 November 2019
Date

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) has established an Inter–Faculty Research Ethics Committee (IFREC) to replace the individual Faculty Research Ethics Committees. UFH Senate (5 September 2019) approved the establishment of IFREC as a sub-committee of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) to centralize research ethics approval processes for all research in the University, excluding those research protocols submitted to the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) and the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC), which are independent accredited research ethics committees. That is, research ethics applications for the Faculties of Humanities and Social Science; Law; Education; Science and Agriculture; and Management and Commerce will be reviewed and approved by IFREC.

These IFREC Terms of Reference are aligned with the UFH Research Ethics Policy and UREC Terms of Reference; and they are operationalized in Standard Operating Procedures. Research ethics applications will be reviewed by IFREC in accordance with the provisions of the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003) and Department of Health (DoH) Ethics in Health Research Guidelines (2015), as a sub-committee of UREC[i].

2. AUTHORITY

The Inter-Faculty Research Ethics Committee (IFREC) derives its delegated authority from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which in turn is a Committee of Senate.

UREC is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (**Registration Number: REC-270710-028**)

IFREC will review research ethics applications for all research at UFH on behalf of UREC, except for those reviewed by HREC and AREC.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 IFREC functions as a standing sub-committee of UREC.

3.2 IFREC's purpose is to review research ethics applications and administer the ethics approval process through independent, prospective and ongoing ethics review of all research projects undertaken by members of staff, registered students and affiliates of UFH (excluding ethics applications to AREC and HREC)

3.3 IFREC will work through a transparent process and ensure quicker turnaround times for ethics approvals, and the issuing of certificates. Certificates will be issued by UREC, signed by the Chairperson of UREC.

3.4 IFREC may refer issues or challenging cases to UREC.

3.5 UREC will serve as the appeals body for IFREC decisions.

3.6 IFREC will work alongside the independently accredited Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) and Health Sciences Ethics Committee (HREC).

4. MEETING PROCEDURES

4.1 The schedule of meetings and administrative support for IFREC is managed by the Office of the Dean of Research in the Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GRMDC).

4.2 IFREC will convene at least once every three (3) weeks (or more frequently according to the number of applications received).

4.3 IFREC will table reports and its minutes on the Agenda of UREC each quarter.

4.4 The University standard meeting procedures will apply.

4.5 The quorum is a simple majority.

5. SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

5.1 IFREC is authorised to:

5.1.1 Conduct rigorous ethics review, prospectively of all research proposals submitted to it to ensure that the welfare and other interests of participants and researchers are properly protected and that the proposed research complies with the ethical norms and standards outlined in the national ethics guidelines (Note: Retrospective ethics reviews are not allowed);

5.1.2 Accept for review, research protocols submitted by staff members, students or affiliates of UFH; and conduct rigorous ethics reviews, prospectively, for all research protocols to ensure the research conducted is scientifically viable and ethically sound;

5.1.3 Consider research proposals from UFH students and staff (within its area of jurisdiction), for ethical compliance and scientific validity in accordance with the approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOP);

5.1.4 Make decisions to approve, to require amendments or to reject the proposals for lack of compliance with scientific or ethics norms and standards;

5.1.5 Notify the researcher or principal investigator (PI), in writing, of final or conditional acceptance or rejection of a research proposal, and any remedial action for resubmission, based on UFH policy guidelines for ethical research; and

5.1.6 Ensure appropriate reporting practices occur to fulfill the oversight obligations of IFREC, with an audit trail of all decisions made.

5.2 IFREC may delegate to a group of committee members to deal with specific aspects of the work of IFREC, e.g. applications that are expedited. Any such delegated work and outcomes must be reported to the full IFREC committee for inclusion in the minutes of the next meeting.

5.3 IFREC members are required to adhere to the Code of Conduct for its members that describes what is expected of members, sign a Confidentiality Agreement and a Conflict of Interest Declaration.

5.4 IFREC must comply with the Senate approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) which describe all the processes and procedures involved in its work, including its institutional arrangements and reporting obligations.

5.5 IFREC must utilize approved, appropriate documentation (application forms, guidance documents, information and consent document guidance as well as reporting templates, amongst others) to facilitate processing of applications and to assist researchers to comply with requirements.

6. COMPOSITION

IFREC members are appointed through a transparent and inclusive recruitment process by UREC. UREC will put out a call for nominations for IFREC. In constituting IFREC, criteria such as research standing, research ethics experience and ethics training as well as diversity are to be considered. Both males and females are required with no one sex holding more than 70% representation.

The Chairperson of IFREC is the Dean of Research; and reports to the Chairperson of UREC (Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs, who has responsibility for the University Research portfolio).

Members of IFREC are appointed for a period of three years. Members can be re-appointed for a second (2nd) and subsequent third (3rd), three-year term consecutively.

Membership

- The Dean of Research (Chairperson)
- One (1) representative nominated from each of the following Faculties: Humanities and Social Sciences; Law; Education; Science and Agriculture; and Management and Commerce. (Each Faculty to nominate a representative and an alternate)
- One (1) layperson from the community where the university is located or conducts its research
- A member with legal training

- At least one (1) member who is professionally trained in qualitative and quantitative methodologies

IFREC may co-opt members for specialist inputs, provided any such members are first approved by UREC.

[i] IFREC functions, with UREC-delegated authority, in compliance with, but not limited to, the following documents and guidelines: The SA National Health Act. No. 61 of 2003; The SA Department of Health (2015) Ethics in health research: Principles, processes and structures;
The SA Department of Health (2015) Ethics in health research: principles, structures and processes and South African good clinical practice guidelines (2006); Declaration of Helsinki (Current version); The Belmont Report (US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 21 CFR 50; 21 CFR 56; CIOMS 2018; ICH-GCP- 2018 E6 Sections 1-4; The International Conference on Harmonization and Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH Tripartite).