



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

1. TITLE: RESEARCH CONDUCT WHISTLEBLOWING STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

2. PURPOSE OF THE SOP

The purpose of this Research Conduct Whistleblowing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to encourage honest individuals to raise their concerns and report wrongdoing concerning research conduct without fear in order to maintain the integrity of research and the reputation of the UFH HREC.

3. SCOPE

The UFH HREC receives whistleblowing applications, reviews them, and provides advice to undo wrongdoing. The whistleblower discloses to the relevant authority in good faith, any wrongdoing during the process of research by submitting a Whistleblowing form along with supporting documents. The Whistleblower report research wrongdoing relating to the following areas:

- **Misconduct** (unacceptable/improper behaviour by a person).
- **Fabrication** (making up research data or results and recording or reporting the fabricated material).
- **Falsification** (manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research records).
- **Plagiarism** (the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit).
- **Fraud** (intentionally deceiving people for financial or personal gain).
- **Maladministration** (actions resulting in injustice, dishonesty, or inefficient leadership).
- **Non-adherence** to approved research procedures, guidelines, or policies.
- Any research ethical misconduct

- **Others** (any other research wrongdoing).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon receiving a case of research wrongdoing from a Whistleblower, the UFH HREC will organize an investigation into the nature of the wrongdoing. If an issue or complaint of a Whistleblower jeopardizes the scientific merit of the research, the outcome of the decisions made by HREC is communicated to the principal investigator or researcher. Depending on the nature or severity of the wrongdoing, a decision can be made to either undo the wrongdoing and monitored the research process to ensure that wrongdoing is not repeated; or suspend the research project, and even withdraw the ethical approval. Any reported case of research wrongdoing by the whistleblower must not exceed two months to complete the investigation thereof. The HREC shall report to the UREC in case of a whistleblower in the UREC meeting.

The HREC respects the confidentiality of the whistleblower and ensures that Institutional Policy and comprehensive laws on South African Protected Disclosures Act (PDA) which was amended by the Protected Disclosures Amendment Act, Act 5 of 2017 protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Similarly, if the whistleblower chooses to remain anonymous in reporting research wrongdoing, the HREC will maintain the anonymity of the whistleblower.

5. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- The National Health Act, No 61 of 2003.
- Regulations Relating to Research with Human Participants, 11 July 2018.
- Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (Department of Health, 2015)
- South African National Standard: The Care and Use of for Scientific Purposes (SANS 10386:2008).
- The Rules for the Management of Research Ethics at the University of Fort Hare, 2011.
- Constitution of the Ethics committee, Faculty of Health Sciences University of Free State
- SOP Whistleblowing, University of North West