



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

TITLE: Terms of Reference for the Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC)

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IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY:

IFHREC Chairperson; Director: Research and Innovation; Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research, Partnerships and Innovation

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TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FOLLOWING Documents:

- University Research Ethics Policy
- IFHREC Terms of Reference
- UFH Code of conduct for Research Ethics and Biosafety Committees
- National Human Research Ethics Council Guidelines
- National Department of Health Guidelines

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Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Version: 29 August 2024)

1. INTRODUCTION

The main responsibility of the Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC) is to ensure that research conducted at the University of the Fort Hare (UFH) by staff members, postdoctoral fellows, students and UFH affiliates is ethical and does not compromise the welfare, safety, rights and / or interests of participants (humans or animals) and of the public. IFHREC is accredited by the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC), and it complies with the National Department of Health (NDoH) guidelines of 2024. IFHREC shall submit quarterly reports to the UFH Senate Research Ethics Oversight Committee and annual reports to NHREC.

Terms of Reference (ToR) for IFHREC are aligned with the UFH Research Ethics Policy and are operationalised through IFHREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The ToR are also aligned with the provisions of the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003) which requires every institution (such as the University) to establish or have access to a Research Ethics Committee accredited by the NHREC. Researchers must obtain ethical clearance of their research proposals before implementation of the research project commences. IFHREC shall not issue ethical clearance retrospectively, i.e. after the research project has already commenced.

2. AUTHORITY

IFHREC shall have authority to review all research proposals from UFH staff members, postdoctoral fellows, students and affiliates except proposals for clinical or medical research, proposals for research involving animals or animal samples and proposals for research that involves biohazardous materials that include genetically modified organisms (GMOs), release of GMOs into the environment, recombinant DNA (rDNA), RNA derived from rDNA, human pathogens requiring biosafety level (BSL) 2 labs or higher BSL and radioactive materials. Research that involves biohazardous materials shall be reviewed by a Biosafety committee. IFHREC shall have the authority to passively and actively monitor research projects that it approved.

3. PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose and responsibilities of IFHREC are to:

- 3.1** Review, approve, and monitor all research projects that involve humans, the environment, secondary data analysis or desktop research, except clinical or medical research, proposals for research involving animals or animal samples and proposals for research that involve biohazardous materials that include genetically modified organisms (GMOs), release of GMOs into the environment, recombinant DNA (rDNA), RNA derived from rDNA, human pathogens requiring biosafety level (BSL) 2 labs or higher BSL and radioactive materials.
- 3.2** Promote respect for human rights in research, as well as ethical values and research integrity in the University.
- 3.3** Ensure that a programme of ongoing ethics training is in place for members of IFHREC
- 3.4** Monitor to ensure that all research proposals and practices are reviewed from an ethical perspective.
- 3.5** Review and approve applications for extension of ethical clearance
- 3.6** Review and approve annual progress reports and close-out reports.

- 3.7 Give due attention to ethical issues surrounding research that involves vulnerable categories of participants (for example, the poor and the marginalised, pregnant women, children, v people with disabilities, people in prison, refugees, the elderly, etc.)
- 3.8 Review a n d a p p r o v e proposed protocol amendments.
- 3.9 Appoint, from time to time, a standing or ad hoc subcommittee to investigate or finalise certain matters under its jurisdiction (for example, to conduct a site visit for active monitoring) in compliance with applicable norms, rules and regulations.

4. MEETING PROCEDURES

- 4.1 The IFHREC secretariat schedules meeting dates and provides IFHREC members with details.
- 4.2 IFREC shall meet once per month, generally during the last week of each month.

4.3 Special meetings shall be organised on ad-hoc basis

4.4 The quorum is a fifty percent (50%) + One percent (1%) or thirty three percent (33%) if committee has fifteen (15) or more members.

5. REPORTING

IFHREC shall submit:

5.1 Quarterly reports to the UFH Senate Research Ethics Oversight Committee.

5.2 Annual reports to NHREC

6. COMPOSITION

The composition of the IFREC is in accordance with National Department of Health (NDoH) guidelines of 2024. Members of IFREC will collectively have qualifications, experience and expertise needed to evaluate the scientific, legal, psychosocial and ethical aspects of research proposals received from applicants. The total number of members must be at least nine (9), including the Chairperson.

The following applies to the composition of IFREC:

6.1 Members of IFHREC are appointed for a period of four (4) years;

6.2 Members of IFHREC can be re-appointed for two consecutive terms.

6.3 To be appointed for a third (3rd) term, there must be a gap year before the third term appointment.

6.4 The IFHREC composition shall include the following:

- 6.4.1 At least one layperson who is from the communities in which the University is located or conducts its research and who is not currently involved in medical, scientific or legal work;
 - 6.4.2 At least one member with training and experience in qualitative research methodologies
 - 6.4.3 At least one member with training and experience in quantitative research methodologies
 - 6.4.4 At least one member with expertise in biostatistics
 - 6.4.5 At least one member with expertise and experience in research ethics
 - 6.4.6 At least one member with a legal background and has knowledge in research ethics.
- 6.5 Gender representation in IFHREC should be reasonably balanced.
- 6.6 IFHREC composition should increasingly reflect the demographic profile of the population of the Republic of South Africa

7 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

- 7.1 IFHREC shall nominate a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson from its members.
- 7.2 The chairperson must have experience conducting research and should have at least two years' experience in Research Ethics. Leadership qualities and experience are also important.
- 7.3 Nominations of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson shall be tabled before the Senate Research Ethics

Oversight Committee for ratification and formal appointment.

7.4 The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson shall be appointed for a period of 3 to 5 years.

7.5 It shall be permissible to nominate and appoint an external person who is not UFH employee as Chairperson.

8. COSTS OF PARTICIPATION OF NON-UFH MEMBERS COVERED

8.1 The University of Fort Hare shall cover costs of participation of IFHREC members who are not employees of UFH.

8.2 A sitting allowance of R950 per meeting or workshop that an external member participates in shall be paid to cover pertinent costs that include data, airtime, fuel for local travel, printing and refreshments.

8.3 The sitting allowance is not remuneration; it covers costs that external members have to incur to take part in IFHREC activities.

8.4 The allowance applies to face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings.

8.5 The University of Fort Hare shall cover costs that associated with IFHREC activities, such as flights, accommodation, car hire, per diem, training costs, and other relevant and costs that are permitted by UFH policies.

8.6 The amount of sitting allowance per meeting per external member shall be reviewed every two years by IFHREC and approved by SREOC.