

POLICY ON RESEARCH ETHICS

Policy #: RIPPOL003

Date issued:	May 2004	Name of owner of the policy:	DVC: RIP
Date checked by Quality Promotion:	30 July 2009	Date checked by Legal Services:	29 July 2009
Notification date: AC	9 June 2009	Notification date: ASC	23 June 2009
Date Draft policy placed online for comments: QP		Date approved by CRIC:	21 April 2009
Date approved by AC:	9 June 2009	Date approved by ASC:	
Date approved by EMC:		Date approved by Senate:	
Date approved by Council:		Date Quality Promotion post e-document on the web:	
Date filed by Legal Services:		Date reviewed:	2 April 2009

This policy, its rules, guidelines and procedures replace all previous policies and/or circulars on Research Ethics.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) to independently evaluate, approve and monitor research that involves humans, animals and the environment within a framework of generally accepted research ethics guidelines.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Animals** mean non-human vertebrates that are capable of being aware of sensations and emotions, of feeling pain and suffering, and of experiencing a state of well being; they are aware of their surroundings and of what happens to them.
- 2.2 **Conflict of Interest (COI)** means a situation in which someone has competing professional or personal interests; such competing interests can make it difficult to fulfill his or her duties impartially.

- 2.3 **Central Research and Innovation Committee (CRIC)** means the duly constituted committee in terms of the Tshwane University of Technology Policy: Research and Development Policy.
- 2.4 **Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC)** means the Faculty-based subcommittee of the Higher Degrees Committee in terms of the Tshwane University of Technology Policy: Policy on Postgraduate Studies.
- 2.5 **Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC)** means the Faculty-based subcommittee of the Central Research and Innovation Committee in terms of the Tshwane University of Technology Policy: Research and Development Policy.
- 2.6 **Human subject & Research participant** mean an individual about whom a researcher obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or through identifiable private information/documents.
- 2.7 **Research** means the creative investigation, conducted systematically to validate previous research findings, to contribute to new knowledge, and to increase scientific and technological knowledge.
- 2.8 **Research Ethics** means the critical reflection and application of internationally-accepted criteria, norms and values for research conduct involving human subjects, animals and the environment.
- 2.9 **Research and Innovation Committee of HEDS (RICH)** refers to the research committee within the Senior Directorate for Higher Education development and Support that coordinates and regulates research activity in the environment.
- 2.10 **Research Proposal** means a document, inclusive of relevant annexures, that was prepared according to the TUT Framework for Research Proposals or any other funding agency proposal guidelines (e.g. National Research Foundation proposal guidelines, Medical Research Council guidelines).
- 2.11 **Supervisor** means a full-time or part-time staff member of the University, or an external person from industry or another university who, on account of his or her expertise or experience is directly involved in giving a student guidance in his or her studies, in respect of both technical and academic aspects, in the preparation of a dissertation or thesis to obtain a postgraduate qualification and act as assessor of that dissertation or thesis.
- 2.12 **TUT** means the Tshwane University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended; and
- 2.13 **University** means the Tshwane University of Technology, as duly constituted in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended.

3. RULES

3.1 The Research Ethics Committee (REC) is a standing sub-committee of the Central Research and Innovation Committee (CRIC).

3.2 Where research proposals involve the use of vertebrate animals, the proposals are referred to the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC), which is a standing sub-committee of the REC, for evaluation and approval.

3.3 Rules of the Research Ethics Committee

3.3.1 The membership of the REC is composed within the following framework:

- i One representative of each Faculty [nominated by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC) and confirmed by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC)]. This includes one representative of the Directorate: Higher Education Development and Support (HEDS) [nominated by the Research and Innovation Committee of HEDS (RICH)]. Each Faculty may also nominate one *secundus* who will attend the REC meeting when the faculty representative is unable to do so. The faculty representatives should have expertise in a particular field of research and the scholarly research process *and* should have expertise, or undertake to acquire expertise within a set time with support of the FRIC/FHDC, in matters of research ethics; and
- ii One member who is versed in the laws of the country and the regulations and policies of TUT – nominated by the Registrar; and
- iii One representative of the Directorate: Research, Innovation and Partnerships (DRIP) – nominated by the Director: Research and Innovation; and
- iv The Chairperson of the Animal Research Ethics Committee, who may not at the same time be one of the faculty representatives [see 3.3.1(i)]; and
- v One member who has professional training in qualitative research methodologies – appointed by the REC; and
- vi One member who has professional training in statistics - nominated by the Director: Research and Innovation; and
- vii One lay person who has no affiliation with TUT and is preferably from one of the communities in which one or more TUT research project/s is/are/will take place and who in the view of the REC will add value to the protection of the community - appointed by the REC; and

- viii Additional members may be co-opted by the REC from relevant interest groups, where the REC does not have the necessary expertise to evaluate particular research fields (e.g. environmental ethics, intellectual property rights, indigenous knowledge systems); and
- ix The Chairperson of the CRIC is an *ex officio* member; and
- x An administrator, who is a non-voting member.

Member type	Number of members
Faculty representatives; RICH representative	8
DRIP representative	1
Lay person	1
Chairperson: Animal Research Ethics Committee	1
Law expert	1
Qualitative Research expert	1
Statistician	1
Co-opted members	Optional
Administrator (non-voting)	1
Chairperson: CRIC (<i>ex officio</i>)	1
Consultants (non-voting)	Optional
TOTAL: Voting members	14 plus Co-opted members
TOTAL: Non-voting members	2 plus Consultants

- 3.3.2 The term of office is three years, and, on the expiry of his/her term, an individual member may indicate his/her availability for a further term of office to the relevant body who initially nominated/appointed him/her.
- 3.3.3 All the members will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement at the onset of their term of office and/or at the onset of each meeting. This agreement is meant to protect the confidential nature of all the documents, discussions and deliberations of REC meetings.
- 3.3.4 The members of the REC elect their own chairperson and vice-chairperson. The elected vice-chairperson will chair the meeting when the chairperson is absent, or when the chairperson needs to recuse him/herself from deliberations of specific research proposals or other REC matters.
- 3.3.5 Membership of the REC should as far as possible reflect the diversity of the South African society. Ideally, not more than 70% of the REC should be of one gender only.
- 3.3.6 The REC meets at least four times a year, but preferably eight times a year.
- 3.3.7 The quorum of REC meetings is 50 % plus one (1) member.

- 3.3.8 The REC may approve, require amendments/revisions to, or reject a research proposal on ethical grounds. The REC will not consider proposals for approval if the research project's data collection has already started or has been completed.
- 3.3.9 Decisions regarding ethics approval are preferably reached by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the members will vote on the approval of the particular proposal. Ethics approval is granted to a research proposal when at least 75% of the members present vote in favour of such approval. The number of abstentions and/or votes against the ethics approval of a research proposal, together with the reasons for it, will be recorded in the minutes.
- 3.3.10 In the case where a member has any conflict of interest in relation to the research proposal under consideration, he/she will not have voting rights and must recuse himself/herself from the meeting while the proposal is considered. This must be noted in the minutes of the meeting. However, he/she may provide additional clarifying information regarding the proposal before being recused.
- 3.3.11 A researcher may lodge an appeal against the REC's rejection of his/her research proposal to the REC Chairperson. If the matter can not be resolved to all the concerned parties' satisfaction, the REC will refer the appeal to the CRIC. In such a case, the CRIC will co-opt at least two research ethics experts (TUT and/or non-TUT individuals) from the relevant field to consider the appeal.
- 3.3.12 The REC also undertakes the ethics monitoring of research where required.
- 3.4 Rules of the Animal Research Ethics Committee
- 3.4.1 The membership of the Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) is composed within the following framework:
- i One representative of the Faculty Science [nominated by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC) and confirmed by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee (FHDC)]. The Faculty may also nominate one secundus who will attend the AREC meeting when the faculty representative is unable to do so; and
 - ii One member who has professional training in quantitative research methodologies – appointed by the REC; and
 - iii One veterinarian registered with the South African Veterinary Council - appointed by the REC; and;

- iv One veterinary technologist registered with the South African Veterinary Council - appointed by the REC. He/she must have competence and experience in working with laboratory animals; and
- v One representative from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA); and
- vi Additional members may be co-opted from relevant interest groups by the AREC chairperson, where the AREC does not have the necessary expertise to evaluate particular animal research; and
- vii An administrator, who is a non-voting member.

Member type	Number of members
Faculty of Science representative	1
Veterinarian	1
Veterinary technologist	1
NSPCA representative	1
Quantitative research expert	1
Co-opted members	Optional
Administrator (non-voting)	1
Chairperson: CRIC (<i>ex officio</i>)	1
TOTAL: Voting members	5 plus Co-opted members
TOTAL: Non-voting members	2

- 3.4.2 The term of office is three years, and, on the expiry of his/her term, an individual member may indicate his/her availability for a further term of office to the relevant body who initially nominated/appointed him/her.
- 3.4.3 The members of the AREC elect their own chairperson and vice-chairperson. The AREC Chairperson is also a member of the REC.
- 3.4.4 The AREC meets on an *ad hoc* basis whenever research proposals involving the use of animals are submitted for approval.
- 3.4.5 The quorum of AREC meetings is 50 % plus one (1) member.
- 3.4.6 All the decisions made by the AREC are ratified at the next REC meeting.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Research Ethics Review

5. DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 Research Ethics Committee: Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines
- 5.2 Research Ethics Committee: Terms of Reference
- 5.3 Research Ethics Committee: Ethics Declaration
- 5.4 Generally accepted Research Ethics Guidelines:
 - 5.4.1 Declaration of Helsinki, World Medical Association
 - 5.4.2 International ethics guidelines for biomedical research involving human subjects, Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences
 - 5.4.3 Medical Research Council (South Africa) Guidelines on Ethics for Medical Research: Booklet series: 1) General Principles; 2) Reproductive Biology and Genetic Research; 3) Use of Animals in Research; 4) Use of Biohazards and Radiation; and 5) HIV Vaccine Trials
 - 5.4.4 Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa): Research Code
 - 5.4.5 SANS 10386-2008. The care and use of animals for scientific purposes.
 - 5.4.6 Department of Health, Republic of South Africa: 1) Ethics in health research: Principles, structures and processes; and 2) Guidelines for good practice in the conduct of clinical trials with human participants in South Africa.
 - 5.4.7 Any other ethics codes relevant for a specific discipline.

6. SIGNATURES

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(Updated: July 29th, 2009)