

 UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  Faculty of Theology and Religion	<b>Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)</b>	
	<b>Research Ethics Committee (REC): Faculty of Theology and Religion (FTR)</b>	
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<b>Procedure Title:</b> Functioning, Composition and Review Process		

## 1. Objective of the SOP

- 1.1. The main purpose of the SOP is to set out the terms of reference and the standards for operating procedure that ensures the REC fulfils its mandate.
- 1.2. The mandate of the REC, as a subcommittee of the University of Pretoria's (UP) Senate Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity, is to ensure that research conducted by undergraduate students, postgraduate students and members of staff and other researchers at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, in particular research that includes persons or animals as participants, is ethically sound. This is determined by the relevant policies at the University of Pretoria, as well as the relevant national and sector-specific legislation.

## 2. Composition of the REC

- 2.1 The committee is comprised of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a systems administrator and academic staff representatives of each of the academic departments of the FTR, as far as possible, staff capacity permitting.
- 2.2 The REC nominates and elects new members at one of the quarterly meetings. The nomination is then presented to the FTR's Management Committee for final approval.
- 2.3. Members serve for a three (3 year)-term, which is renewable based on the staff capacity and the needs of the FTR. The renewal is to be approved by the Management Committee of the FTR.
- 2.4 New members shall undergo training and attend at least one course on Research Ethics during their term.

## 3. Scope of the REC

- 3.1 The FTR, REC is responsible for reviewing research that includes persons and animals as sources of information, that is conducted by undergraduate students,

postgraduate students and members of staff at the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria. The FTR, REC obtains applications broadly in two ways:

- 3.1.1 Staff members responsible for undergraduate modules *submit declarations of ethical intent*, if they want students to do site visits, interview members of faith communities and interview students or staff of the University of Pretoria.
- 3.1.2 Students, staff and associated researchers (research associates of the FTR) conducting research that utilises people and or animals as sources of information, must *submit an online application for approval* via the Research and Ethics section on the UP staff and student Portal.

#### **4. Functioning and meeting of the REC**

- 4.1 The REC will meet 3-4 times per year to review and sign off on the protocols that have been submitted on the Ethics approval system, based on a pre-determined cut-off date by the REC.
- 4.2 A *protocol* is the designated term for an application.
- 4.3 Each protocol will be reviewed by at least two (2) members of the REC. If the outcome of the different evaluations of the protocol differ in major ways and a dispute arises, the protocol will be viewed by the Chairperson of the REC and discussed at an emergency meeting of the REC.
- 4.4 REC evaluators should take a maximum of two (2) weeks to review each protocol, to assist with timeous feedback to researchers.
- 4.5 Members of the REC should inform the chairperson and administrator if they are unable to do a review within a week after receiving the instruction to review.
- 4.6 The administrator is required to inform the chairperson, should a review not be done timeously. The chairperson should follow up, and may defer complex cases to the REC and the FTR's Postgraduate and Research Committees.

#### **5. Responsibilities of researchers**

- 5.1 All researchers are responsible for conducting ethically responsible research. This includes, but is not limited, to the following:
  - 5.1.1 Researchers should see to it that they are informed about the most recent legislation and university policies.
  - 5.1.2 Researchers should ensure that they obtain ethical clearance before they commence with their research projects. The REC of the FTR *does not provide retrospective approval*.

- 5.1.3 When researchers conduct research involving UP staff or students, the researcher should submit their research proposal for approval at UP's Institutional Survey Committee.
- 5.1.4 Researchers should apply for institutional permission, where such permission is a requirement, in a timely fashion. This should be done prior to applying for ethical clearance.

## **6. Review Process and Timeline**

- 6.1 BDiv, BTh (Hons) and PGDip students, as well as all research and coursework Masters, and all Doctoral (PhD) students, staff and associated researchers of the FTR, submit a title, proposal and other necessary information such as Informed Consent Forms, interview or survey questions, and institutional permission (where applicable) via the online Research and Ethics Grants function on the UP Portal. The applicant completes the online generated application form.
- 6.2 The systems administrator is notified and two (reviewers) are appointed and notified.
- 6.3 The reviewers review the application and associated documents and indicate their evaluations and recommendations. This is sent back to the systems administrator.
- 6.4 If approved, the Deputy Dean and Chairperson of the REC takes note of the outcome of the evaluators and sign off on the application (protocol). An approval letter is sent to the applicant.
- 6.5 If there are additional comments or requirements by the evaluator, this must be addressed, and application resubmitted by the applicant before the application may be reviewed again and approved.
- 6.6 A student has six (6) months from date of registration to submit their proposals and one (1) month after review has taken place, to resubmit if revisions were required.

## **7. Associated Documents**

- 7.1 Code of Ethics for Scholarly Activities (Rt 429/99 (amended May 2012))
- 7.2 Plagiarism Prevention Policy (S 5106/19)
- 7.3 Policy and Procedure for Responsible Research (S 4083/00 (amended July 2007))
- 7.4 Research Data Management Policy (S4417/17)