



**FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Research ethics is the science of criteria, norms and values for human action and conduct in research. It is engaged in reflection and analysis of morals concerning whether an act is good or bad and how it influences the quest for meaning. Its intention is to safeguard human dignity and to promote justice, equality, truth and trust. Therefore, ethics is a critical reflection of morality.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Research Ethics Committees in faculties are sub-committees of the Senate Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity of the University of Pretoria to monitor the general accepted scientific principles and ethical standards that underlie all research, and to ensure that all research is bound by generally accepted ethical principles.

## **3. COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Research Ethics Committee (hereafter referred to as "the Committee") consists of:

- 3.1** At least one (1) member from each department in the Faculty. The members are nominated by the Head of the Department on the basis of their experience in the successful supervision of postgraduate students and research experience. Nominees should preferably hold the rank of Associate Professor or Professor. In cases where there is not capacity to appoint at these ranks, a more junior nomination can be made.
- 3.2** Members who are co-opted by the Committee with permission of the Dean. Co-option can be general or for a specific matter on the agenda of the Committee;
- 3.3** Members of the Committee are appointed for a term of two (2) years, with the option of reappointment for a further term;
- 3.4** The Office of the Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies provides secretarial support to the Committee;
- 3.5** The committee is chaired by a nominated member of the Committee. There should be a Deputy Chairperson who acts in the absence of the chair and this person is designated by the Committee at the beginning of each academic year;

## **4. THE FUNCTION OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

- 4.1** The Committee has a monitoring function in respect of generally accepted ethical standards that underlie all research.
- 4.2** The Committee ensures that all research in the Faculty that involves human subjects and/or respondents is bound by specific ethical principles. These include:
  - the protection of research participants and researchers from harm or exploitation;
  - the preservation of a participant's rights, which takes precedent over society's rights;
  - the provision of reassurance to society that rights are maintained;

- ensuring that researchers are properly qualified and experienced; and
- the investigation of allegations of scientific misconduct and reporting of findings to the Faculty Board.

The underlying rationale is to preserve and respect the rights, freedom and well-being of all people.

The Committee, however, does not function in the place of the ethically conscious researcher, who must take the responsibility for his/her human subjects and/or respondents. The functions of the Committee are performed with due circumspection so that the integrity of departments and the University is not jeopardised.

The Research Ethics Committee works independently, but in synergy with other related committees, namely the Research Committee, overseeing all research within the Faculty, and the Postgraduate Committee whose principal objective is to monitor and approve graduate research proposals.

## **5. THE PROCESS OF ETHICS CLEARANCE**

- 5.1** All researchers must apply for ethics clearance. This includes research undertaken to obtain academic qualifications (honours, mini-dissertations and full dissertations on master's level, and doctoral theses), as well as any research carried out by UP staff members, where this research may be published in any form of an article or a research report.
- 5.2** Ethics clearance for Honours research and mini-dissertations are handled at the Departmental level. The Head of Department, in collaboration with the Departmental Research Committee, finalises the process of application for ethical clearance by ensuring that the correct protocol is followed, and a letter of informed consent is drafted. A report is submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee who will then ratify it. *The onus for ethical clearance of Honours scripts and Master's level mini-dissertations resides within departments, unless students or/and staff members are involved, in which case it has to be approved by the Research Ethics Committee.*
- 5.3** The application form and requirements for ethical clearance are accessible via the Ethics Committee page of the Faculty website.

## **6. GENERAL**

- 6.1** The Committee meets once per month. The Committee comprises representatives from all academic departments within the Faculty. Each member considers (an) application(s) on a rotating basis, and presents and discusses the application(s) during the subsequent meeting. The researcher is notified in writing, via the study leader/promoter, of the outcome of the application. A copy of the correspondence is also forwarded to the relevant Head of Department.
- 6.2** The Heads of Department are kept informed. Reports of the activities of the Committee are presented monthly at the Heads of Department meeting.
- 6.3** The Committee advises the Dean on strategic matters relating to research ethics.
- 6.4** The Committee has to comply with all UP regulations including the Health and Safety Requirement regulations.
- 6.5** If a member of the Committee is a supervisor or co-supervisor of a candidate or in cases where matters of candidates of such a member serve before the Committee, the said committee member must recuse himself/herself and an alternate member of the department concerned should represent the department and prior notice of the alternate's name should be given to the Chairperson.