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Policy		Guideline		Remit	X	Constitution											
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Document name:	Amended Remit of the Senate Research Ethics Committee
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AMENDED REMIT OF THE SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

1. Name of the committee

The name of the committee is the Senate Research Ethics Committee (“SREC”) of the University of the Free State (“UFS”).

2. Statement of aim

2.1 The SREC is a standing committee of the Senate of the UFS, established by the Senate in terms of paragraph 22(7)(a) of the UFS Statute. The SREC is the advisory and governing committee of research ethics.

2.2 The Remit is aligned with the UFS’s Research, Integrity and Ethics Policy. The National Health Act, 63 of 2003, requires that institutions establish a Research Ethics Committee (“REC”) and that research projects undergo prior ethics review by an REC registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC).

2.3 The SREC is the structure that governs the establishment and functioning of RECs, as well as their continued registration with the NHREC.

3. Membership

3.1 Members of the SREC should have the appropriate qualifications and experience to evaluate the ethical aspects of research. The SREC membership should be independent, interfaculty-oriented and multidisciplinary.

3.2 The SREC shall consist of the following members:

3.2.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation acts as the Chairperson.

3.2.2 The Senior Director: Directorate of Research Development acts as the Vice-Chairperson.

3.2.3 Seven (7) members of the Senate (elected by the Senate), composed of:

a) two (2) members from the Humaniora (the faculties of the Humanities, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, and Theology and Religion);

b) two (2) members from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences;

c) two (2) members from the Faculty of Health Sciences;

d) one (1) member from the Faculty of Law;

- 3.2.4 the chairpersons of each of the respective RECs, of all the faculties;
 - 3.2.5 one (1) representative from each faculty that serves on the General Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC), appointed by the GHREC ;
 - 3.2.6 one (1) person at the UFS with knowledge and experience of the national research ethics code and guidelines;
 - 3.2.7 the Rims Project Manager and Research Ethics Adviser (Advisory);
 - 3.2.8 the Director: Centre for Graduate Support (Advisory).
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- 3.3 Membership of the SREC must represent the community it serves and reflect the demographic profile of the UFS staff and student body.
 - 3.4 The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall serve in this capacity for the duration of their membership of the SREC.
 - 3.5 The SREC may invite additional experts to participate in discussions concerning a specific proposal on the agenda. Such persons will not possess voting rights.
 - 3.6 The Senate appoints the SREC members. Members are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to ensure that knowledge and information obtained by an SREC member remains confidential.
 - 3.7 The appointed members must receive formal notice of appointment and assurance that the UFS will provide legal protection for any liability that might arise in the course of bona fide fulfilment of their duties as SREC members. In this regard, the UFS will obtain professional liability insurance to cover both affiliated and non-affiliated members in carrying out their functions and duties.
 - 3.8 The SREC must ensure that both SREC and REC members receive initial and continued training in the evaluation of ethical research and that they are kept aware of current issues and developments in research ethics in general. Conversely, each SREC member is obliged to ensure that he/she remains adequately informed on all aspects of research ethics.
 - 3.9 The Registrar facilitates the election and nomination of qualifying members of the Senate.
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- 4. **Term of office**
- 4.1 Members appointed in terms of paragraphs 3.2.1 to 3.2.2 and 3.2.7 to 3.2.8 shall hold office for as long as they are employed by the UFS in their respective capacities.

- 4.2 Members elected in terms of paragraphs 3.2.3 and 3.2.5 to 3.2.6 will hold office for a term of four (4) years and may serve for a maximum of two (2) terms of four (4) years consecutively, unless they resign or are replaced by their respective constituencies.
- 4.3 Members who serve on the SREC in their capacity as chairpersons of the RECs (in accordance with paragraph 3.2.4) will immediately cease to be members of the SREC in the event that their REC chairpersonship is terminated or expires.
- 4.4 A member of the SREC may resign and the nominating body may subsequently replace the departing member with a new member.
- 4.5 The SREC may decide to suspend or terminate someone's membership due to the member's conduct or failure to attend three (3) consecutive scheduled meetings without tendering an apology or good reason for his/her absence.

5. Functions and responsibilities

- 5.1 The SREC's general functions are to advise the Senate on issues pertaining to research, to finalise matters related to research ethics on behalf of the Senate and to govern and coordinate ethical research and research ethics committees. The jurisdiction and functioning of the SREC are determined in accordance with this Remit, as well as the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) approved and adopted by the Senate.
- 5.2 The SREC contributes towards promoting the UFS's reputation as a research-driven institution and an important role-player in research, and it ensures that research development opportunities and possibilities are created and maintained.
- 5.3 One of the UFS's main objectives is to promote ethically sound research. In order to achieve and maintain this objective, strategies and structures should be implemented to ensure that:
- 5.3.1 ethical standards of practice in research conduct, as prescribed by the relevant acts, regulations, standards and guidelines applicable to the specific REC, are maintained;
 - 5.3.2 research participants, the environment, animals and researchers are protected from harm and exploitation;
 - 5.3.3 the research is sound and scientifically acceptable, and that systems promoting and supporting research are in place;
 - 5.3.4 reassurance is provided to society that the above-mentioned objectives are observed and promoted.
- 5.4 The SREC's purposes include, but are not limited to:

- a) advising the Senate on research-related policy issues and issues pertaining to the general control function of the Committee;
 - b) ensuring the effective functioning and coordination of the RECs;
 - c) acting as an advisory and governance structure of the RECs;
 - d) acting as an appeal and advisory board tasked with hearing complaints and making recommendations.
- 5.5 The SREC coordinates ethical research, while the implementation of the policy pertaining to ethical research (“policy”) is facilitated by the relevant registered interfaculty Research Ethics Committees (RECs). These committees are:
- a) General Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC)
 - b) Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSREC)
 - c) Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC)
 - d) Environment and Biosafety Research Ethics Committee (EBREC)
- 5.6 The RECs will, in accordance with national and international research ethics codes and guidelines, review and approve or reject research proposals submitted by parties conducting research at the UFS and monitor the ethical compliance of the research.
- 5.7 The SREC shall annually review the Remit of the Committee and submit the recommended amendments to the Senate for consideration and approval.

6. Delegated authority

- 6.1 The SREC, as mandated by the Senate of the UFS, has the authority to exercise the following functions:
- 6.1.1 Finalise and review the research policy and recommend approval thereof to the Senate and Council.
 - 6.1.2 Develop and review the relevant ethical guidelines of RECs in accordance with national and international regulations, norms and standards for ethically sound research and recommend such guidelines to the ECS for approval in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Framework.
 - 6.1.3 Oversee the implementation of, and compliance with, the policy in all research activities undertaken at the UFS.
 - 6.1.4 Decide on procedures and recommend these to the ECS for approval in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Framework in cases where special ethical clearance is required, which may include research on a topic of a secret or criminal nature.

- 6.1.5 Oversee the establishment of the RECs and alter their structure, composition and functioning where appropriate.
- 6.1.6 Draft and finalise procedures (according to acceptable norms and standards) for dealing with researchers' appeals regarding the review and determination of the ethical clearance of their research proposals by relevant RECs (REC appeal procedure) and recommend these to the ECS for approval in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Framework.
- 6.1.7 Implement procedures (according to acceptable norms and standards) to facilitate whistleblowing.
- 6.1.8 Implement procedures (according to acceptable norms and standards) to deal with research misconduct, which will be outlined in the policy in order to ensure accessibility for all relevant parties.
- 6.1.9 Appoint standing or ad hoc subcommittees to investigate certain matters under its jurisdiction, establish the functions and rights of such subcommittees, and advise on the execution thereof.
- 6.1.10 Implement procedures to monitor ethical aspects relating to all research activities.
- 6.1.11 Implement strategies to ensure that all procedures, as indicated above, have been implemented and are functional.
- 6.1.12 Remain abreast of all developments in the implementation of national and international guidelines on ethical research and advise the Senate and senior management of the UFS accordingly.

7. Meetings and procedures

- 7.1 The SREC shall convene at least four (4) times annually – one meeting in each term.
- 7.2 An urgent meeting may be scheduled by the Chairperson if necessary.
- 7.3 The SREC is required to keep minutes of its proceedings and submit a quarterly report on its activities to the Senate.
- 7.4 Fifty percent (50%) plus one (1) of the voting members of the SREC constitutes a quorum.
- 7.5 Decisions of the SREC will be taken on the basis of consensus and in the event that consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be taken on the basis of a simple majority vote. Members of the SREC have the right to have a minority viewpoint recorded in the minutes as an alternative to the consensus opinion.
- 7.6 Observers or advisers may participate in the discussion, but may not vote on any matter and do not form part of the quorum.
- 7.7 In the event of a tie of votes, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.

- 7.8 If the nominated Chairperson of the SREC is absent from the meeting, the Vice-Chairperson shall act in his/her place.
- 7.9 In the absence of both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, the SREC appoints an acting Chairperson from the members present at the meeting.
- 7.10 The Meeting Administration Department is responsible for secretariat services.
- 7.11 All documents for discussion at a meeting must be submitted to the Meeting Administration Department at least ten (10) workdays before the scheduled meeting.
- 7.12 The Meeting Administration Department will distribute the agenda to all members at least five (5) days before the meeting.

8. Evaluation of the SREC's performance

- 8.1 The performance of the SREC shall be evaluated annually by the Senate.