

Terms of Reference
Humanities Faculty, Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) Research Ethics Committee (REC)

Title	Terms of Reference, Humanities Faculty Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) Research Ethics Committee (REC)
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Person(s) responsible for drafting, review and revision	Research Ethics Chair and Deputy Chair (Lead researchers employed in the CSSR)
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Approval route	REC>CSSR Management Committee > Send to: Humanities Faculty Research Ethics committee Board > Humanities Dean and Senate Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC) for noting.
Approving body	Humanities Faculty REC
Relevant related policies, procedures and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCT Policy for Responsible Conduct of Research • UCT Research Ethics Code for Research Involving Human Participants • Register of Ethics Approvals for Research Conducted under the Auspices of UCT • Code for UCT Research Ethics Committee Members • Appeal to Ethics in Research Committee: Standard Operating Procedure • Conflict of Interest Policy • Policy and Standard Operating Procedure: Ethics Clearance and Permission to Engage UCT Staff and/or Students or their Data in Research • UCT Policy and Procedures for Breach of Research Ethics Codes and Allegations of Misconduct in Research • UCT Whistleblowing Policy • EiRC Recommendations: Standard criteria for inclusion in research invitations • UCT Guideline for Risk-Based Ethical Review of Research (Human Participants) • EiRC Guidelines and recommendations for the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in research • UCT Research Data Management Policy • National Department of Health (2024). South African Ethics in Health Research Guidelines (2nd draft circulated for comment Feb 2024).

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1. Purpose

To ensure the protection of human rights and the well-being of research participants based on ethical and integrity principles and norms, and compliance with the highest ethical standards in social and scientific research, including matters involving authorship and research misconduct, but excluding research involving animals.¹

2. Delegated authority of the committee

The Humanities Faculty Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) Research Ethics Committee (REC) has been established to review and take decisions on ethics applications it receives from Centre for Social Science (CSSR) affiliated researchers, including staff and honorary research associates. The CSSR REC has been granted this authority by the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee.

Furthermore, the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee recognise the independence of the CSSR REC to make decisions within the scope of its terms of reference, standard operating procedure, institutional policies and international and national laws, with no undue influence or interference placed on the committee.

3. Membership

a. Composition

The CSSR REC consists of the Chair and Deputy Chair who report to the CSSR Director. The Chair and Deputy Chair will call on researchers in the CSSR – an inter-disciplinary centre - to review research ethics applications. The Chair should at a minimum have a PhD qualification and at least 2 years relevant research experience, including research ethics training. The Deputy Chair should at a minimum have a Masters qualification and at least 2 years research experience, including research ethics training.

b. Administrative support

A Servicing Officer (the CSSR Administrative Assistant) shall be responsible for:

- Monitoring the CSSR REC Inbox on a weekly basis and alerting the Chair and Deputy Chair of new applications.
- Capturing relevant details of the application on the tracking document (researcher name, study title, date received, reference number, etc).
- Liaising with potential reviewers from the CSSR, including sharing documentation, eliciting feedback, and notifying REC Chair and Deputy Chair when documentation is ready for their review and input.
- Once the REC has decided on an outcome of an application and completed the outcome letter, communicating with the applicant and saving a copy of the outcome letter(s) on Sharepoint.
- Keeping the CSSR's membership list (which includes potential reviewers) up to date.

¹ Adapted from the Senate Ethics in Research Committee Terms of Reference (2023), https://uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/uct_ac_za/87/files/SENATE%20ETHICS%20IN%20RESEARCH%20COMMITTEE%20ToR.pdf

If the Servicing Officer is not available or the CSSR Administrative Assistant post is vacant, an experienced Research Assistant from the CSSR will be called on to support.

c. Term of office

Committee members will be appointed for a period of 4 years. Committee members shall be permitted to serve two (2) consecutive terms, following which they are not eligible for further membership until at least one appointment cycle (4 years) has lapsed. After a break in service committee members are eligible to be reappointed to the Humanities Faculty CSSR REC.

d. Appointment of a Chair

Once every four years during a CSSR Management committee, the Director will ask for nominations for the Chair and Deputy Chair of the CSSR REC. The committee will vote and approve the successful candidate, taking into account the minimum requirements listed above in point a.

e. Duties of the REC Chair

The Chair of the REC is expected to guide the efficient and ethical functioning of the committee. The Chair will be responsible for:

- Reviewing and updating the Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures (every two years) and any other guiding documents as needed.
- Signing off on research project outcomes letters.
- Reviewing and signing off on annual reports to the EiRC and other institutional bodies.
- Ensuring that any declared conflicts of interest/commitment are suitably addressed in the functioning of the committee and decisions it makes.

f. Election of a Deputy Chair

See Point d above.

g. Duties of the REC Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair will assist the Chair with the abovementioned responsibilities listed in e above, and will step into the role of Chair when necessary.

h. Training requirements

CSSR REC members will be expected to undergo appropriate ethics related training including – but not limited to – the training offered by the [UCT Office of Research Integrity](#).

i. Membership list

The membership list (which includes potential reviewers) shall be kept up-to-date (checked on an annual basis) by the committee's Servicing Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

j. Conduct of committee members

Members of the Humanities Faculty CSSR REC shall conduct themselves in accordance with the [UCT Code for Research Ethics Committee members](#).

4. Committee records and documentation

The committee shall have access to a shared repository on Sharepoint. The repository shall contain at least the following documents:

- i. Current and previous terms of reference documents.
- ii. Current and previous standard operating procedure documents.

- iii. Current and previous guidelines, practice notes or recommendations developed by the committee.
- iv. Record of current and previous committee membership,
- v. Current and previous annual reports prepared for the EiRC and other bodies to which the REC reports.
- vi. Record of the training committee members have undertaken, when, the service provider and any additional or refresher training undertaken by committee members.
- vii. A summary table of project applications received with their outcomes².
- viii. All outcomes letters and/or other communications sent to applicants².
- ix. Any incidents or deviations from ethics practices or policies which have been reviewed by the committee.

5. Availability of committee documentation

The following documentation shall be made available on the CSSR website, to keep the operations of the REC as transparent as is possible:

- i. Most recent or currently approved terms of reference
- ii. Most recent or currently approved standard operating procedures
- iii. Most recent or currently approved guidelines, practice notes, recommendations,
- iv. Contact details for the Chair and/or Servicing Officer so that queries may be directed appropriately, this may be a shared committee email account.

6. Accountability, oversight, and reporting

a. Annual Reporting

Faculty oversight and reporting

The Humanities Faculty CSSR REC is appointed by the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee, it is therefore accountable to this Committee.

The committee shall make an annual report available to the Humanities Faculty Dean/Faculty Board. The report shall summarise the activities of the committee for the preceding year, including the number of ethics project applications received, those approved or rejected and, reasons for rejection.

Reporting to the Senate Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC)

The REC is also accountable to the EiRC, the umbrella body of all Faculty and Departmental RECs across the institution.

The committee shall make an annual report available to the EiRC. The report shall summarise the activities of the committee for the preceding year, including the number of ethics project applications received, those approved or rejected and, reasons for rejection. The EiRC shall provide a reporting template to the Faculty REC to complete to streamline and harmonise the reporting practices across the institution.

b. Incident or deviation reporting

The REC shall report any incidents that deviate from ethics and integrity best-practice or institutional policy to the CSSR Director who will report to the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee. The report shall include a summary of the incident, the deliberative process that REC engaged in to reach a

² As more committees make use of eRA this requirement will fall away as the system provides for this requirement

decision, what that decision is, any remedial action recommended and the progress of the remedial action.

Any incidents may also be reported to the EiRC, either at a regular committee meeting or in the annual report process, whichever route the Chair deems is most appropriate.

7. Remuneration of committee members

Members of the Humanities Faculty CSSR REC will not receive remuneration for their role on the REC. Members may request a letter from the Servicing Officer signed by the Chair, confirming the length and type of service on the committee to include in *ad hominem* promotion applications or similar purposes.

8. Authorship and acknowledgement

The template document for Faculty Terms of Reference (ToR) was developed by Mrs Paula Saner (Manager, Office of Research Integrity). Each Faculty has permission to edit and adjust the template to suit faculty needs and practices.

The National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) Ethics in Health Research Guidelines (2015) provided useful information which has been incorporated into this ToR document.

Thanks go to the internal audit team for recommendations for improving ethics governance structures at UCT through strengthening and harmonising (where possible) documentation and processes.