



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Faculty of Health Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee



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Dear Heads of Departments, Departmental Research Chairs, Principal Investigators, Researchers, Supervisors, Postdoctoral Fellows, Postgraduate Students and Undergraduate Students

RE: FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCHERS AND ALL STUDENTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH

In 2024 the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) published the updated Ethics in Health Research Guidelines: Principles, Processes and Structures (National Department of Health, NDoH 2024).

The updated guidelines stipulate that "all researchers, and students who undertake research with human participants must complete theoretical research ethics training to ensure they are familiar with expectations, especially those set out in the NDoH 2024 guidelines and, for clinical trials, the South African Guidelines for Good Practice in the Conduct of Clinical Trials, SA GCP 2020 (Section 5.4, page 86: NDoH, 2024)".

The expectation is that all researchers, including undergraduate and postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows, should complete the institutional-required research ethics training before conducting research. Researchers are expected to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge, skills, expertise, competence, including discipline-appropriate scientific background and research ethics training to conduct studies involving human participants (NDoH, 2024).

Accordingly, the Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) will require evidence of research ethics training from everyone involved in research, to be submitted with all new protocol applications and annual progress reports for health research¹. This research ethics training requirement includes all researchers with direct or indirect interaction with human participants or their data and samples. The training requirement also encompasses all types of health research, including but not limited to clinical trials, quantitative research, qualitative research, cell lines, case reports/series, databases/registries/repositories, systematic or scoping reviews, retrospective audits or folder reviews, and all student research. If you have any queries regarding the research ethics training requirement for different study staff or the nature of health research, please contact the HREC at hrec-enquiries@uct.ac.za.

All researchers are requested to adhere to the research ethics training requirement as soon as possible. Importantly, please note that, effective from **1 January 2026**, the HREC will **not** accept new ethics applications or annual progress reports without research ethics training certification as described below.

The preferred UCT institutional research ethics training is the **Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Module 4: Research Involving Human Participants** and **Module 5: Managing and Sharing Human Research Data**, as a minimum standard to satisfy the research ethics requirement.

¹ The National Health Act 61 of 2003 (NHA) defines 'health research' to include any research which contributes to knowledge of a) the biological, clinical, psychological or social processes in human beings, b) improved methods for the provision of health services, c) human pathology, d) the causes of disease, e) the effects of the environment on the human body, f) the development or new application of pharmaceuticals, medicines, and related substances, and g) the development of new applications of health technology (NDoH, 2024).

The [internal training](#) developed by the UCT Office of Research Integrity (ORI) is freely available to all UCT staff on permanent / T2 conditions of service, postdoctoral fellows, and master and doctoral students via the SuccessFactors Learning Platform. If you experience technical issues with the training platform, please contact the ORI directly via email at research.integrity@uct.ac.za.

In addition, the HREC will also accept the [Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation \(TRREE\)](#) course certification and Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans ([TCPS 2](#)), particularly for honours and undergraduate students and temporary staff who do not have access to the training course platform.

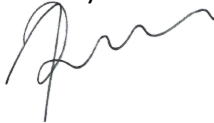
Researchers involved in clinical trials are still required to have valid South African Good Clinical Practice (SA GCP) certification in addition to the above research ethics training requirements.

Please note that, in accordance with NDoH (2024) requirements, research ethics training must be renewed every three years. If prior research ethics training has been completed (only for courses stated above), this certification will be accepted by the HREC if the date of completion is within three years of the training requirement effective date (1 January 2026).

Please plan ahead and ensure completion of the required research ethics training before submitting HREC applications and annual progress reports.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and is essential to ensuring continued compliance with national and institutional requirements for health research in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Yours sincerely



PROFESSOR MARC BLOCKMAN

CHAIRPERSON, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE