


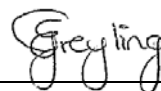
Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (EduREC)

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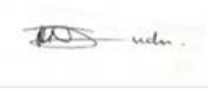
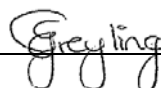
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Acknowledgment is given to documentation from the Education, Management, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMHS-REC) and Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) as used in the compilation of this SOP.

1. COMPILATION AND AUTHORISATION

Action	Designated person	Signature	Date
Compiled by	Prof. JAK Olivier (EduREC chairperson)		2018/07/19
Checked by	Mrs Erna Greyling (committee administrator)		2018/07/19
	EduREC		2018/07/26
	Faculty of Education Research and Innovation Committee		2018/08/02

2. DISTRIBUTION

Department/Unit	Name	Signature	Date
Chairperson on behalf of EduREC	Prof. JAK Olivier		2018/08/03
Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation	Prof. Washington Dudu		2018/08/03
Faculty of Education	Mrs Erna Greyling		2018/08/03

3. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version 1: 12 March 2018 – based on existing operating documentation as compiled by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (EduREC) and provided to members of the Faculty.

Version 2: 19 July 2018 – revisions made to align the SOP with the revised structure in the Faculty.

4. PURPOSE OF THE SOP

This SOP provides guidelines for the management of three types of complaints:

1. Complaints from researchers about a member of the EduREC or the EduREC itself
2. Complaints from a member of the EduREC or the EduREC itself about a researcher
3. Complaints received from a research participant, co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about research conduct and/or the researcher.

During any investigation of complaints, the EduREC will adhere to the following principles:

- Fairness
- Confidentiality
- Integrity
- Prevention of detriment

5. SCOPE

Notwithstanding this complaint procedure, processes will comply with National Regulations, including that the Chair of an Ethics Committee retains the right to immediately suspend or terminate any research study that violates National Regulations.

6. ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation/definition	Description
EduREC	Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education
REC	Research Ethics Committee
NWU	North-West University
Complaint	Refers to any action of RECs, a REC member, researcher, co-researcher, research assistant, research participant, or interested community member about dissatisfaction with research related activities which they wish to take forward in a formal manner.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

This SOP provides guidelines for RECs, a REC member, researcher, co-researcher, research assistant, research participant, or interested community member on how to handle any dissatisfaction related to research related activities.

8. PROCEDURE/S

8.1 Procedure for complaints from researchers about a member of the EduREC or the EduREC itself

Should a researcher/post-graduate student experience a problem with a specific EduREC member's behaviour or the EduREC itself regarding meeting procedures, application management or reviewer report/s, they have the opportunity to lodge a complaint.

The complaint should be lodged in writing to the chairperson of the applicable ethics committee (EduREC).

Such a written complaint will initiate the following process:

A meeting will immediately be constituted with the complainant, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee and the relevant member to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. If the complainant is a post-graduate student the supervisor/promoter will be included in this discussion. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the Chairperson. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible with the complainant, the Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee, the member and the Director of the applicable research entity to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the Chairperson. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant may approach the NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee to lodge the unresolved complaint, also providing proof that the aforementioned internal mediation process was followed and unsuccessful. If this process is unsuccessful the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) can be approached. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC.

The complaint and its outcome will be reported during the following EduREC meeting.

8.2 Complaints from a member of EduREC or EduREC about a researcher

Should a member of the EduREC or the EduREC itself experience a problem with a specific researcher's behaviour or research actions, they have the opportunity to lodge a complaint.

The complaint should be lodged in writing to the Chairperson of the applicable ethics committee (EduREC). Such a written complaint will initiate the following process:

A meeting will immediately be constituted with the complainant, the researcher, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee to discuss the complaint about the researcher in an attempt to find an amicable solution, and to communicate the problem and consequences to the researcher in the most appropriate way. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the Chairperson and kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible between the complainant, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee, and the researcher to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the Chairperson which will be kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible with the researcher, the complainant, the Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee, and the Director of the applicable research entity to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the Chairperson which will be kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant may approach the NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC) to lodge the unresolved complaint, also providing proof that the aforementioned internal mediation process was followed and unsuccessful. If this process is unsuccessful the National Health

Research Ethics Council (NHREC) can be approached. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC.

The complaint and its outcome will be reported during the following EduREC meeting.

8.3 Procedure for complaints received from a research participant, co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about research conduct and/or the researcher

In the informed consent documentation, clear reference is made to either the researcher or the applicable EduREC secretariat that should be contacted if a research participant has any queries or complaints regarding either the research conduct or the researcher.

Likewise, a complaint can be lodged by a co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about the research conducted itself and/or the researcher.

These complaints should be received in the form of a written letter, e-mail or phone call. When such a complaint is received, the Chairperson should be contacted immediately and a plan of action devised in agreement with the Vice-Chair of the EduREC.

The minimum plan of action should include:

1. Immediately making contact with the complainant via telephone (preferred if available) plus e-mail if available (to have key deliberations on record).
2. If possible, an immediate meeting should be set up with the complainant.
3. The researcher is contacted immediately and requested to supply the Chair with a written report.

A separate meeting is set up between the Chair, Vice-Chair of the applicable Ethics Committee and the researcher.

The outcome of the two meetings (one with the complainant and one with the researcher) will inform the necessity of a further meeting as soon as possible where the researcher, the complainant, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the applicable ethics committee will finalise the complaint.

Should this not be achievable, a final meeting between all parties mentioned previously, as well as the Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation and the Director of the applicable research entity will be constituted as soon as possible in an attempt to find an amicable solution.

A detailed written report of the aforementioned processes and outcomes will be compiled by the involved persons (Chairperson of the applicable REC) and circulated for correctness and fairness. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant shall be advised about his/her right to contact the RERC and NHREC. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC and all necessary contact information shall be provided to the complainant.

The complaint and outcome will be reported during the following EduREC meeting.

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Guideline for the Management of Complaints, Complaints and Advisory Disciplinary Committee (CADC), NHREC, February 2015.

10. ADDENDA

None