**Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (EduREC)**

*Risk level descriptors*

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| **Risk level** | **Description** |
| **1. High risk**  Research involving human participants in which there is a real and foreseeable risk of psychological harm and/or social stigmatisation or persecution – which may lead to serious adverse event, if not managed in a responsible manner | * Any research deemed to present potential severe consequences for whatever reason by any applicant or committee * Any research with children (Ages 17 and younger). * Research with people suffering from psychological conditions that affect their cognitive, behavioural, or social functioning so that they cannot take informed decisions on their own behalf. * Research involving high-risk sensitive ethical dilemmas in society. * Research that may adversely affect public or environmental safety or sensitive ecosystems. |
| **2. Medium risk**  Research involving human participants in whom there exists a potential risk of physical, emotional and/or psychological harm and/or social stigmatisation, prosecution or persecution. However, appropriate steps can be taken to mitigate or reduce the overall risk of this/these occurrence(s) and that it is not expected that the research will cause severe consequences | * Research with people suffering from psychological conditions that affect their social functioning so that they cannot take informed decisions for example PTSD, trauma, or other similar diagnosed conditions. * Research involving medium -risk sensitive ethical dilemmas in society. * Research involving face-to-face psycho-social contact with participants that can be considered more sensitive, for example interviews, and focus groups on more controversial topics. * Any psycho-social intervention studies in communities. * Non-clinical research/research with vulnerable communities/people, for example older persons and their caregivers, patients and health-care professionals, persons with life-threatening diseases and their care givers, people living with HIV, wards of the state and guardians or care-givers, employees and employers, prisoners and the relevant prison authorities, members of the SA Defence Force and their supervisors, mentally ill persons, special care with women – no clinical research with pregnant women or foetuses, own direct students. * Interventions based on professional and/or scientific protocols with medium-risk potential. |
| **3. Low risk**  Research involving human participants in whom the only foreseeable risk of harm is the potential of minor discomfort or inconvenience (e.g. time and some boredom). The aforementioned risk can also be easily mitigated and addressed by the researcher. | * Research on relatively uncontroversial topics. * Study population are consenting adults (18+ years). * Survey research conducted on non-vulnerable adult participants that can be returned anonymously/confidentially. * Face-to-face surveys on non-sensitive topics by means of validated interview schedules. * Documented data or analyses with identifiable human participants. * Questionnaire, scale, or instrument development/validation. * Interventions based on professional, scientific protocols with low-risk potential. * Projects approved by other recognised ethics committees or higher education and research institutions. * This excludes research where vulnerable communities/people (such as learners) are present in the research context even in a peripheral capacity. |
| **4. Exempt / No risk**  Research does not involve human participants. Therefore, the probability or magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater than that of ordinary experienced life | * Systematic/literature reviews, meta-analysis or use of previously constructed databases without identifiable human participants (secondary analysis). * Publicly available data for example information from corporate reports and websites. * Document/artefact analyses without identifiable human participants. * Public observation without interaction or intervention. |