

University of South Africa Research Ethics Committees	
Title	SOP – Ensuring a valid institutional research ethics register
SOP No	SOP 4 (SRIPCC)_Valid institutional ethics register V1 (2020)
Date of approval	16 April 2020 (URERC)
Revision date	April 2023
Pages	4

### 1. COMPILATION AND AUTHORISATION

Action	Designated person	Date	Signature
Compiled by:	Ms. Kgomotso Gill: Research Ethics Officer	21 October 2019	
Checked by:	Dr. Retha Visagie: Research Integrity Manager	9 April 2020	
Approved by:	URERC Prof Les Labuschagne (Chair: URERC)	16 April 2020	
Authorised by:	VP: Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Studies and Commercialization Prof T Meyiwa	14 May 2020	

### 2. DISTRIBUTION

Department/unit/committee	Name	Date	Signature

### 3. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version no	Reason for revision
21 October 2019	1	Procedure developed
16 April 2020	1	Approved by URERC

#### 4. ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation	Definition/Description
ERC/REC	means the Ethics Review Committee (synonymous with Research Ethics Committee) that is representing a specific UNISA business unit or College, either on unit or departmental level.
CRERC	is the term used by most Colleges to distinguish between the College Research Ethics Review Committee and the sub-ERCs. This structure plays a governance function within the unit/College.
Institutional registry	is an Excel spreadsheet consisting of sub-spreadsheets for each CRERC that provides for the recording of standardised information about all research ethics applications processed across the institution, the outcome of the decisions of all ERCs and access to valid research ethics approval certificates or feedback letters.
Office bearers	include the chairperson that directs the committee's activities and guides the ERCs governance adherence, the deputy chairperson that assumes the roles and responsibilities of the chairperson in his/her absence or execute delegated tasks on behalf of the chairperson, the research ethics and integrity advisor/coordinator and secretary or the administrator of the committee.
Research ethics approval certificate	A certificate that grants a researcher approval to proceed with a research study or project based on the outcome of an objective appraisal of the effect of the proposed research on the wellbeing of potential participants, animals, the environment, researchers, institutions, collectives and communities by an established Ethics Review Committee.
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure/s

#### 5. PURPOSE OF THE SOP

This SOP aims to:

- (a) Provide access, clarity and guidance to the office bearers of Unisa CRERCs and ERCs on how to update the institutional register and to deposit the ethics approval certificates in one safe central depository.
  
- (b) Provide guidance to Unisa office bearers of CRERC and ERCs to ensure efficient operation by eliminating duplication of functions, while striving to maintain a reasonable level of

security regarding the institutional registry. An up-to-date central registry is critical to ensure efficient handling of queries or complaints received on College or Institutional level.

## **6. SCOPE**

The scope of this SOP relates to:

- The functioning of the office bearers of the CRERCs to ensure a valid institutional research ethics registry.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

7.1 The Research Ethics Officer (REO) is responsible to update the institutional research ethics registry annually and to disseminate the link to the updated version to the office bearers of the CRERCs.

7.2 The office bearers of CRERC's must ensure that they receive complete spreadsheets from sub-ERCs if applicable, update the college spreadsheet and deposit the ethics approval certificates as set out in section 8 of this document on the institutional register on ECM/UniDrive.

7.3 The Manager: Research Integrity, the Executive Director: Research, Innovation and Commercialisation and the College Heads: Office of Graduate Studies and Research will have access to view the institutional register.

## **8 ENSURING AN UPDATED AND VALID INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS REGISTRY**

8.1 At the beginning of each academic year, the Research Ethics Officer (REO) shall update the institutional research ethics register and distribute the ECM link of the updated register to the office bearers of the CRERCs.

8.2 The register will be divided into several spreadsheets to accommodate the different Colleges.

8.3 Only authorised office bearers will be granted permission to gain access to the institutional register to update their college register and to deposit the ethics approval certificates.

8.4 The office bearers of sub-unit ERC's are not permitted to access the central repository.

8.5 Authorised persons (7.1 – 7.3) will obtain permission to gain access or to edit the register after they received ECM training and have a workspace created on ECM.

8.5 Authorised office bearers will only be granted permission to edit their college information on the institutional register and to upload the research ethics approval certificates or feedback letters. They will not be able to download the file.

8.7 The designated office bearers will log onto ECM, select their college spreadsheet from the institutional register after monthly ERC meetings and update or edit the spreadsheet.

8.9 The office bearers will complete each field in the spreadsheet and record the outcome of each application and upload the appropriate signed research approval certificate or feedback letter.

8.10 The spreadsheet must include valid research ethics approval certificates signed by the CRERC chairperson and the Executive Dean of the college or his/her designated officer as per the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

8.11 After updating the spreadsheet the office bearer that uploaded the information must save the updates before logging off to prevent data loss.

8.6 The Executive Director: Research, Innovation and Commercialisation and the Manager: Research Integrity will have access to view the complete institutional register.

8.7 A College Head: Office of Graduate Studies and Research will have access to view his/her Colleges spreadsheet exclusively.

## 9. REFERENCES

9.1 Policy on Research Ethics (Approved by Council 15.09.2016)

