



## RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

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<b>Policy administrator</b>	Director: Research Support
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# RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

## Preamble

WHEREAS the North-West University (NWU) wishes to ensure that all research conducted under its auspices is conducted in accordance with national and international ethics standards and statutory requirements and in line with its Vision and Mission;

THEREFORE, against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care, the council of the North-West University (NWU) has adopted this policy on 22 November 2018.

## 1 Policy statement

### 1.1 General principles

At the NWU research must be guided by the following general principles:

- **Beneficence and non-maleficence**, signifying the maximizing of benefit and the minimizing of harm, and requires that the risks of harm posed by the research must be reasonable in light of anticipated benefits;
- **Distributive justice (equality)**, a fair balance of risks and benefits amongst all role-players involved in research. It should reflect the principle of equality by no segment of the population being unduly burdened by harms of research or denied the benefits of knowledge derived from it;
- **Respect (dignity and autonomy)** for research participants, signifying the opportunity for self-determination about their choices. It recognises the importance of dignity, well-being and safety interests of participants, as well as autonomy (DoH, 2015).

### 1.2 Specific principles

The nature and field of a research field may require the guidance of unique principles, to ensure the protection of human and animals involved in research or the prevention of negative environmental impact that must be formulated by every faculty for approval by the Faculty Board and Senate, to be managed and enforced by the relevant academic director and under the supervision of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the faculty concerned.

### 1.3 Shared research ethics standards

For the purposes of establishing shared research ethics standards, Senate must adopt a code of conduct for researchers to serve as a guide to ensure the integrity and ethical conduct of research undertaken under the auspices of the NWU, and for the accountability, professional courtesy and fairness of researchers when collaborating with others, and good stewardship.

## 2 Interpretation and application

The interpretation and application of this policy is subject to the provisions of –

- the Constitution and all relevant legislation and binding national and international regulatory requirements, standards, policies, and procedures relating to research;
- the Statute of the North-West University (2017), with specific reference to matters concerning research referred to in its preamble, paragraphs 14 and 20;
- the General Academic Rules of the North-West University (2018) (A-rules), with specific reference to rules 4.9.4 and 5.9.4, and
- resolutions taken by Senate in accordance with the Statute and the A-rules for the implementation of this policy.

## 3 Roles, responsibilities and accountability

- 3.1 In terms of the Statute of the NWU the Senate regulates all research and academic support functions of the NWU, and faculty boards are accountable to the senate for the monitoring and the oversight of research in the faculty concerned, and may advise the executive dean of the faculty on research, academic support and student matters pertaining to a faculty, as well as appropriate quality-assurance measures.
- 3.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation is responsible for the overall management of this policy and may delegate specific functions and assign duties in this regard to an officer or officers of the NWU.
- 3.3 The executive deans are responsible for the management of this policy in their faculties and may delegate specific functions and assign duties in this regard to a deputy dean and an academic director or directors/heads and an officer or officers of the faculty concerned.
- 3.4 A standing committee known as the Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC) representative of all faculties and the university management must be appointed by Senate for the purposes of rendering advice on the NWU's management of research integrity and research ethics, on the state of which the RERC must report to Senate at least once annually.
- 3.5 Every faculty must establish at least one Research Ethics Committee (REC) to oversee and manage compliance with the requirements of ethical research of minimal risk studies in the various scholarly disciplines, subject to the oversight of the faculty board concerned.
- 3.6 Research with vulnerable participants or greater than minimal risk must be reviewed by one of the RECs specifically appointed for this purpose with expertise in the field of study.
- 3.7 In cases where considerations of research ethics involve more than one discipline, the responsible managers must take steps to activate all relevant REC's.

\* Department of Health 2015. Ethics in Health Research. Principles, Processes and Structures. Second edition.

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