



RHODES UNIVERSITY
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RUAREC Standard Operating Procedure

Conducting of Meetings, Capturing of Meeting Minutes and Keeping Records About Research and Teaching with Animals at Rhodes University

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1. Glossary of terms

Animal – all taxonomic groups of the Kingdom Animalia

EXCO - Executive Committee of the RUAREC

NHREC - National Health research Ethics Council

RU – Rhodes University

RUAREC – Rhodes University Animal Research Ethics Committee

RUEC – Rhodes University Ethics Coordinator

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure

ToR – Terms of Reference

2. Background of this Standards Operating Procedure (SOP)

Ethical review and clearance/approval processes of research and/or certain teaching activities involving animals as defined below (referred to as research and teaching in further text of this SOP), must follow rigorous procedures, adhere to stringent standards, as well as fulfil national and international legal/accreditation requirements and best practices. This SOP and all its parts apply to activities in research and teaching that are conducted in/by:

- All academic departments of Rhodes University;
- All institutes affiliated with Rhodes University;
- All investigations conducted by affiliated researchers working with animals at Rhodes University (these are academic and support staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates and senior research associates).

The above-mentioned academic units and/or individuals are referred to as RU stakeholders in further text of this SOP. Overall, all the unit operations and steps involved in the ethical review and clearance/approval processes of research and teaching at Rhodes University are aimed at achieving the following:

- To produce of new knowledge as part(s) of the academic project at Rhodes University that involves animals;
- To validate, review and continuously update the subject matter and content that are taught as subject matter across all disciplines at Rhodes University which have animal ethics implications;

- To ensure that the knowledge produced and/or validated must be of high standard, as to withstand the peer-review and all other review standards in a given academic discipline in which results of studies that involve animals are published;
- To achieve comprehension and understanding of the necessary and prescribed knowledge of animal physiology, behaviour and other related aspects of curriculum outcomes and/or degree requirements in a particular academic discipline;
- To conduct research and teaching according the principles of academic integrity, fairness and with respect and with the view towards the protection of animal rights;
- To contribute to the preservation of the habitat(s) and the protection of role animals play in relation to society in South Africa at large, on the African continent and internationally.

In light of the above principles and any other relevant ethical considerations, there are several stages to the animal ethics review process and ongoing monitoring of research and teaching. To ensure that the above-mentioned tenets are achieved, one of the steps in the ethical review and active process is the careful scrutiny of application for ethical clearance for research and teaching which involve animals (referred to as ethics application in further text of this SOP), as defined below. The ethical review process must be based on the principles of “*replacement, reduction, refinement and responsibility*”. The definition of an animal, in the context of this SOP, is the same as defined in the SOP on the ensuring of the animal welfare by a veterinarian at Rhodes University and as more specifically as defined in section 3 of the South African National Standard (SANS 10386:2008), however here we also include the lower invertebrates in the definition for this SOP. In line with these facts, all activities in research and teaching with animals by RU stakeholders imply and are aimed at maintaining compliance and adherence to the following South African legislation and international standards that are aimed and protection of animal rights and welfare, namely:

- Animals Protection Act no. 17 of 1962 as amended
- Performing Animals Protection Act no. 24 of 1935 as amended
- SPCA Act no. 169 of 1993
- Animal Matters Amendment Act of 1993
- Animal Protection Amendment Bill of 2017
- South African National Standard no. 10379:2005
- South African National Standard no. 10386:2008
- Professional Code of Ethics of the African Association of Zoos and Aquaria
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, Available at: www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php; website accessed on 18th June 2019).

The above-mentioned list of legislation and international standards is not exhaustive, but must be seen as the minimum standards list that is subject to expansion(s) based on the ongoing developments in the field of animal ethics. The RUAREC Chairperson and Executive Committee (EXCO) are responsible for the research into such novel trends and take ultimate responsibility for the updating of this SOP and all other relevant RU animal ethics SOPs; and take the lead in the updating of all Rhodes University animal ethics policy and the RUAREC terms of reference.

3. Conducting of meetings, capturing of minutes and records keeping of the RUAREC

One of the most important aspects of the animal ethics review process is the auditing of the records of a particular animal (research) ethics committee by the National Health research Ethics Council (NHREC). This is based on the fact that an audit process verifies that RUAREC and all RU stakeholders adhere to the principles outlined in the previous sections of this SOP. The auditable records include the minutes from the quorate RUAREC meetings, where decisions about the approval or rejection of any ethics application, are made. Such records further include reviews of the ethics applications, letters of appointment and terms in office of the RUAREC members and the members of its EXCO. To action the above principles in a consistent and auditable fashion, the RUAREC meeting take place once a month during the respective academic year. The venue(s), times and dates of these meetings are posted on the RU ethics website, which can be found at the following link: <https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

The RUAREC meeting must be properly quorate to make decision about any ethics applications that have been submitted and that have been reviewed by at least two independent reviewers, i.e. reviewers assigned by the Chairperson of the RUAREC and/or the RUEC. Quorum an RUAREC meeting is the same as defined in section 5 of the RUAREC Terms of Reference (designated as ToR in further text). The quorum must be a certain number of members of the RUAREC, who have been properly indemnified and appointed as outlined in section 3 of the ToR, the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of RUAREC; the RUEC and one member of category A, category B, category C and category D must be present. If all the conditions about a quorate meeting are met, as outlined in this paragraph, then the quorate meeting is taking place and its minutes can be captured and/or stored later for the auditing purposes. All decisions made in a quorate meeting are binding and can only be appealed, as outlined in the SOP on animal ethics review at RU.

During a quorate meeting, conduct of the RUAREC meeting must adhere to the procedures as outlined in the ToR of RUAREC. Further to this, minutes must be captured by the RUAREC and these minutes must be a true and complete reflection of the conduct of the RUAREC quorate meeting in question. To be a true and complete reflection of the particular quorate meeting of the RUAREC quorate meeting, the respective meeting minutes must contain the following sections:

- Attendance and/or apologies of the members as indicated on the day of a particular RUAREC meeting or as communicated to the RUEC in advance of the meeting with the reflection of the respective categories of members present at a given meeting;
- Conflict of interest, as indicated by the RUAREC members, in relation to any decisions likely to be taken, or any matters likely to be considered by RUAREC during that particular meeting (this is done by indication on the attendance register and counter-signed by a particular RUAREC member or members);
- Confirmation of quorum as outlined in ToR and in the previous paragraphs of this SOP;
- Confirmation of minutes, and/or making corrections/additions, from the RUAREC meeting that had immediately preceded the particular quorate RUAREC meeting being minuted;
- Reflection that the Chairperson/Deputy Chairperson of RUAREC have confirmed the ratification of the minutes from the preceding RUAREC meeting;
- Follow-up on any RUAREC decisions that were made in previous meeting(s) of the committee, e.g. consideration of any revisions that applicants had been requested to submit to RUAREC;
- Report by the EXCO on any minor revisions approved during the recess between two RUAREC meetings and/or any other EXCO activities which have occurred between two consecutive RUAREC meetings for which dates are listed on the RU ethics website (<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>);
- Follow-up on any investigations or monitoring visits conducted by the EXCO on RUAREC's behalf during the recess between two RUAREC meetings;
- Details of all the ethics applications that have been reviewed by two reviewers and that are debated for a decision, or that any decision(s) has been made about, in the particular quorate meeting;
- Details of all the ethics applications that have been reviewed by two reviewers and that are debated for a decision, or that any decision(s) had been made about in a previous quorate meeting and where resubmission was necessary due to major modifications;
- Details of any of the ethics applications that have been reviewed by two reviewers and that are debated for a decision of "*unsuccessful*" had been made about in a previous quorate meeting and where an appeal resubmission was filled by the applicants;
- Details about the discussion(s) that led to any and all decisions for RUAREC during the particular quorate meeting, including whether such decisions had been made by consensus or by a majority vote of the present RUAREC members;
- If any dissenting opinion(s) is/are recorded, during the RUAREC discussion on any agenda items during the particular RUAREC meeting, then the reason(s) for all the dissenting opinions and their practical impact(s) on the execution of any activities involving animals by RU stakeholders must be reflected in the minutes truthfully and completely;

- The conduct of the meeting must follow the rules of the meeting as outlined in the RUAREC ToR and the respective meeting minutes must reflect this;
- Report of the EXCO on any relevant trends or development in the field of animal ethics, that RUAREC members must be made aware to further their professional development as RUAREC members and/or to continuously update the RUAREC procedure with the ever-evolving best practices in the field of animal research/teaching ethics;
- Confirmation of all the actions to be taken by RUAREC until the next meeting;
- Confirmation of the date of the next RUAREC meeting.

The RUEC is responsible for the taking of minutes during the RUAREC meetings, after the confirmation of each point with the Chair of RUAREC. After a particular meeting, the draft minutes of the RUAREC meeting just past must be circulated to the RUAREC members by the RUEC within 72 working hours of the meeting's conclusion. Any comments received must be addressed and the minutes must then be sent out to the RUAREC members, along with a list of decisions taken, to RUAREC members within one week of the particular quorate meeting of RUAREC, having taken place. All minutes and the RUAREC meeting records must be kept in electronic form in the office of the RUEC for 5 years after the date of finalisation. Only the Chairperson of RUAREC or the RUEC can have access to these archived records. The system is to be built around the archiving functions of the ERAS system.

4. References

- African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (ASZA, 2007). Professional code of ethics. *Operational document 2.13.2*, African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (South African non-profit organisation no. 034-450-NPO).
- Animal Matters Amendment Act of 1993 (1993-present). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Animals Protection Act no. 17 of 1962 as amended (1962-2007). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Performing Animals Protection Act no. 24 of 1935 as amended (1935-present). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- South African Bureau of Standards/Standards South Africa (SANS, 2008). The care and use of animals for scientific purposes - South African National Standard 10386:2008. Standards South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- South African Bureau of Standards/Standards South Africa (SANS, 2005). South African National Standard 10379:2005. Standards South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- South African Animal Protection Amendment Bill (SAAPAB, 2017). Published in the South African Government Gazette as notice no. 41289 in 2017, South African Government Printing Works, Pretoria/Cape Town, South Africa.
- South African Veterinary and para-veterinary professions act no. 19 of 1982 as amended (SAVPVA, 2004-2007). Published in the South African Government Gazette as notice no. 26311 in 2004 and updated as notice no. 30184, South African Government Printing Works, Pretoria/Cape Town, South Africa.