



# RHODES UNIVERSITY

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## RHODES UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

### SOP 4.6 ETHICS WAIVER

Approved by:	Name	Signature	Date
Human Research Ethics Committee	Dr Janet Hayward (Chair)		2/4/2024
Endorsed by:			
VC Legal Unit	Mr Ismail Amojee		22/4/2024
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COMPILED BY Dr Janet Hayward, Chair, Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee

DOCUMENT HISTORY  
Version 1.0 (April 2024)

## **ETHICS WAIVER**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to describe and delineate the conditions under which research ethics clearance is not required and the processes for acquiring ethics waiver.

### **2. Research not requiring ethical clearance**

- 2.1. Studies that do not involve any contact with human participants do not require ethical clearance.
- 2.2. Such studies are categorised in the Rhodes University Research Ethics Policy: Research Involving Human Participants (p 7) as “Risk category 1” studies, and include:
  - 1) use of previously collected data that received ethics clearance,
  - 2) use of anonymized human datasets,
  - 3) document analysis of documents firmly in the public domain,
  - 4) literature review,
  - 5) studies based on theoretical or secondary analysis alone,
  - 6) use of human biological material (e.g. human cells lines from a commercial source(s) or established cell lines, where the results or the sourcing of such materials definitely do not lead to social risks),
  - 7) use of open access digital texts that are available in the public domain.
  - 8) observation of people in public spaces and natural environments, provided that the individuals or groups do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy, the researcher does not interact directly with individuals or groups, or stage any intervention, and that the dissemination of research findings does not identify individuals or groups.

### **3. Procedure where an applicant requests ethics waiver**

- 3.1. If a researcher requires proof of ethics waiver for purposes of publication of research findings or any other purpose, they are to apply to Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC) in writing by email to [ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)
- 3.2. The letter should explain the purposes and data collection methods of the proposed study.
- 3.3. The Chairperson of RU-HREC with assistance of the coordinator will review the request and grant ethics waiver where appropriate or if necessary, advise that conventional ethics clearance be sought.
- 3.4. Evidence of ethics waiver by means of an official letter in PDF form is to be emailed to the applicant.
- 3.5. All records including a copy of the ethics waiver request and approval letters are to be filed and stored for a minimum of five years.

### **4. Procedure if an application is submitted for review and does not need ethical clearance**

- 4.1. If an applicant accidentally submits an ethics application for a project that does not require ethical clearance, the application will be withdrawn as soon as the mistake is noted, whether by the coordinator, assigned reviewer, or quorate RU-HREC meeting.
- 4.2. The applicant will be informed of the reasons for withdrawal of their application by email.
- 4.3. Evidence of ethics waiver by means of an official letter in PDF form will be emailed to the applicant.

4.4. All records including a copy of the ethics application form and the ethics waiver approval letter are to be filed and stored for a minimum of five years.

**5. Effective date of this SOP**

2 April 2024 with the next revision date being 2 April 2027, or as deemed necessary by a quorate meeting of RU-HREC.