



POLICY

CODE OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH ETHICS

Introduction

This Code expresses the ethical values of all staff engaged in academic and/or research activities at the Foundation for Professional Development (FPD), who have committed themselves to:

- uphold the values of freedom, democracy, equality, human dignity and respect for diversity;
- strive for distinguished scholarship, excellence in teaching, reputable research and innovation through leading, challenging, creating and exploring knowledge;
- put intellectual capital to work by offering access to a wide spectrum of vocational and academic programmes; and
- accomplish the above through individuality, collective effort, and partnerships with its communities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Code of Academic and Research Ethics is to guide staff engaged in academic and research activities to:

- respect the human dignity and rights of all stakeholders;
- promote human well-being;
- promote and demonstrate shared ethical values and fulfil all academic/research activities;
- uphold and promote individual, group and institutional integrity whilst fulfilling their roles as managers, lecturers, researchers, supervisors, mentors and/or advisors;
- engender trust in the institution and the practice of science;
- legitimise discussion of ethical issues; and
- facilitate appropriate ethical decision making.

Status and Use of the Code

The Academic Committee is the custodian of the FPD Code of Academic and Research Ethics. They are responsible for implementing the Code, developing policies, fulfilling advisory and oversight roles, and functioning as a channel for appeals against decisions. The Academic Committee facilitates compliance with the Code in all academic activities and the FPD Research Unit facilitates compliance with the code in research activities and is accountable to the Managing Director for the manner they perform their duties.

This Code provides guidelines to the Academic Committee for the identification, evaluation and handling of ethical issues. When academic employees assume their duties, they are familiarised with, and endorse this Code.

The guidelines and provisions of the Code embody a continuous commitment to quality care for all the participants involved in research. The Code must therefore be interpreted within the context of the Guidelines for Ethical Research and Good Clinical Practice in South Africa¹ as prescribed by the National Department of Health. This Code can be augmented from time to time to deal with other aspects of academic/research duties. Any matter not covered in this Code must be dealt with through new interpretations and applications of the scope and spirit of the existing values and principles of the code.

Values Constitutional Values

This Code of ethics:

- is embedded within the core values of our constitutional democracy, as reflected in the Bill of Rights²; and
- reflects both the spirit and the letter of the law of the country.

Human Rights and Academic Work

We have a responsibility to familiarise ourselves and comply with those human rights that have a direct bearing on our academic work. Examples of such rights include the right to:³

- equality and non-discrimination (section 9);
- human dignity (section 10);
- life (section 11);
- freedom and security of the person (section 12);
- privacy (section 14);
- freedom of religion, belief and opinion (section 15);
- freedom of expression (section 16);
- access information (section 32); and
- just administrative action (section 33).

Fundamental Values of Academic Activity

We undertake our work according to the following fundamental values:

- the pursuit of truth by means of free inquiry and open dialogue;
- the optimum development of human potential by means of our intellectual expertise;
- a commitment to excellence in everything we do; and
- just and fair treatment of human beings, other living beings, the environment, and human remains.

Responsibilities

Providing accurate information

We are transparent in the provision of accurate and sufficiently detailed information to students, academic peers, administrative and managerial colleagues, and other stakeholders whose work depends on such information, in accordance with generally accepted academic and scientific practice, and the South African Promotion of Access to Information Act.⁴

¹ These documents can be found here: <http://www.kznhealth.gov.za/research/guideline2.pdf>;

<http://nhrec.health.gov.za/index.php/grids-preview>

² Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: Chapter 2 Bill of Rights. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf>

³ Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/saconstitution-web-eng.pdf>

⁴ Republic of South Africa. Promotion of Access to Information (Act 2 of 2000). Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a2-000.pdf

Demonstrating competence and expertise

We are committed to demonstrating and continually developing appropriate competence and expertise in:

- designing and teaching courses;
- generating, executing, and presenting research; and
- making expertise available to stakeholders.

Developing human potential

We accept responsibility for developing the human potential of students and colleagues in:

- providing state of the art course content;
- using the best available and most appropriate teaching methods;
- developing and sharing quality research; and
- complying with generally accepted ethical standards to enhance wellbeing and to avoid harmful conduct.

Giving Credit

We are just and fair in giving others appropriate credit for their contributions, performance, and achievements, whether in:

- evaluating students' work;
- peer reviewing colleagues' work;
- awarding promotion, funding, and prizes;
- deciding authorship; and
- appraising character or performance.

Using power judiciously

We are aware of the power involved in research, teaching, mentoring, and managerial relationships and activities, and undertake to use power generated, *inter alia* by expertise, experience, excellence, academic rank, and managerial level, in accordance with the rights of other people involved.

Managing personal well-being

We accept responsibility, in conjunction with relevant others, for our personal well-being to provide quality service in our various roles through optimum self-efficacy.

Considering supporting codes

All academics need to take into account other codes of ethics that might be relevant to their work, i.e. international codes of ethics negotiated by regional or global organisations and codes of ethics accepted by national and international academic organisations.

Approval of research proposals

The design and methodology of research undertaken by a member of staff or student, using research with subjects including people, human remains, other living beings or the environment, must be submitted to the FPD Research and Ethics Committee (FPDREC), or any other research ethics committee that is acknowledged by the South African National Research Ethics Council, for evaluation and approval, especially if required by legislation, professional councils or institutions affected by the research. In addition, approval by relevant authorities and stakeholders, as applicable, should be obtained prior to commencement of participant recruitment.

Students must affirm, in writing, that the foreseeable ethical implications of the proposed research will be thoroughly considered when submitting research topics to supervisors. The same applies to submissions of post-graduate students to faculty boards.

Students (FPD-registered students or students of other institutions who are requesting access to FPD staff or students as research participants) who submit research essays, mini-dissertations, dissertations, or theses must declare that their research has complied with the FPD Code of Ethics, and where applicable, the code of their School.

All research involving human and non-human participants must obtain ethical clearance from a research ethics council registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council before the onset of any research activity.

Research designs that involve minimal risk to human participants may obtain ethical approval from the FPDREC.

The practice of science

Researchers aspire to the highest degree of integrity in their research by:

- complying with the highest standards of scientific research;
- acknowledging and carefully indicating the limitations of their methods and findings;
- making no misrepresentation in the dissemination of research information and findings;
- not fabricating data or information;
- designating authorship of consulted research sources clearly, accurately and justly and assigning authorship of research publications accurately and justly;
- committing no form of plagiarism; and
- not practising or promoting any constitutionally recognised unfair discrimination in research.

Relationships with the community

Data or information must be gathered and recorded in such a way that it can be made available at any time (after completion of the study) to other interested parties without violating anonymity or undermining confidentiality.

In exercising their rights to academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, researchers are accountable to the community for the manner they exercise such rights. Researchers will carefully consider potentially destructive consequences of their research activities, outputs, and outcomes on the human or natural environments and will avoid such research projects, or diligently reduce the risk of such consequences through their research activities.

Researchers will promote the open flow and exchange of science and scholarship in and through their research activities, save where commercially confidential research projects require a temporary restriction of the flow of sensitive information, until legal protection has been secured with the assistance of the FPD's Intellectual Property representatives.

Relationships with sponsors

The methods, contents and results of research funded (fully or partially) by external funders must be fully disclosed, providing full particulars of the external person or institution who funded the research in the published results of the research.

Researchers must be honest with sponsors regarding the research, their qualifications, research expertise and skills. Researchers must ensure that sponsors require nothing of the research that is contrary to internationally acknowledged standards for ethical research.

Researchers will only utilise a sponsor's funds for purposes explicitly approved by the sponsor.

Relationships with research participants and research objects

Researchers should, at all times, respect research participants' right to freedom, dignity, privacy (including the right to remain anonymous) and bodily and psychological integrity.

The appropriate Research Ethics clearance must be obtained to accommodate specific research subjects which extends to non-human living beings and the environment.

Researchers may use people as participants of research only if the participants gave their proven informed consent for their participation in the research. Anyone under the age of 18 years may not choose independently whether or not to participate in research. A parent or legal guardian must give permission for the minor to decide. Any research that involves minors needs to meet the criteria set out in the NDoH Ethics in Health Research Guidelines.⁵

Researchers should treat non-human living beings with care, respect and an awareness of their vulnerability and defenselessness.

Researchers should undertake research in a careful and considered manner that causes minimal harm to the environment and that creates minimal pollution.

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee and Research Unit is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis. The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and FPD's community via the website and other publications.

⁵ National Department of Health. 2015. Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures. Available at: <https://hpca.co.za/download/doh-2015-ethics-in-health-research-guidelines/>