

**Note:** The following three documents should be read in conjunction with each other:

- ▪ **UCT Code for research involving human subjects** (which sets out the principles relevant in the relationships of the researcher to (i) The research community and its ethos; (ii) Research subjects; (iii) Society as a whole; and (iv) The sponsors of research)
- ▪ **Ethics For Researchers Involving Human Subjects: Standards And Procedures** (which sets out the Faculty responsibility regarding research proposals).
- ▪ **Ethics in research for staff, including joint staff on provincial conditions of service, and for students** (which deals with the policy and procedures for minimising, and dealing with allegations of dishonest, fraud, or other ethical misconduct relating to research.)

Issues regarding research involving animals are dealt with via the Animal Ethics Committee.

## **UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN CODE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

The University of Cape Town encourages and supports research in a wide range of human sciences. In the exercise of this task it strives for a just distribution and a responsible utilisation of resources and of the benefits of its research in the interests of South African society and the human condition as a whole. This means that the University of Cape Town sets itself the aim of doing research:

- (i) With scholarly integrity and excellence
- (ii) With social sensitivity and responsibility
- (iii) With respect for the dignity and self-esteem of the individual and for basic human rights
- (iv) With reference to clearly specified standards of conduct and procedures ensuring proper accountability

In the pursuit of this ideal, UCT subscribes to the interdependent principles of scholarly responsibility, integrity and honesty, of human dignity and of academic freedom and openness. In the context of research, these principles are relevant in the relationships of the researcher to:

- (i) The research community and its ethos
- (ii) Research subjects
- (iii) Society as a whole
- (iv) The sponsors of research

### **Researchers and the Research Community**

1. Research should always be carried out in a thoroughly scholarly and responsible manner. Researchers must recognise their responsibility for:
  - (i) The design, methodology and execution of their research
  - (ii) Planning it in such a way that the findings have a high degree of validity
  - (iii) Reporting their findings, and their limitations, so that these may be subject to peer review and publicly available, and
  - (iv) Pointing, where relevant, to the possibility of alternative interpretations
2. The right of fellow researchers to research from a variety of paradigms, and to use a range of methods and techniques should be respected.
3. In the communication of their findings, researchers should adhere to the principles of honesty, clarity, comprehensiveness, accountability and openness to public scrutiny.
4. The authority of professional codes relating to specific disciplines should be recognised and honoured.
5. Researchers must not misuse their positions as researchers for personal gain.

### **Researchers and participants (research subjects) in the Research process**

1. In the planning of research, researchers should consider the ethical acceptability and the foreseeable consequences of their research.
2. If conflict arises between the interests of researchers and those of research subjects, the principle holds that the interests of the research subject take precedence.
3. Participation in research requires informed, uncoerced, consent of participants. Researchers should inform participants, in language they can understand, of the aims and implications of the research project and of any other considerations which might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate.
4. Researchers should respect the right of individuals to refuse to participate in research and to withdraw their participation without prejudice to them at any stage.
5. Researchers must protect participants against foreseeable physical, psychological or social harm or suffering which might be experienced in the course of the research. Researchers should be especially sensitive in their protection of the rights and interests of more vulnerable participants, such as children and the aged. When there is risk of harm, discussion of this with participants or their guardians must precede the research and be included in the informed consent procedure. No research should be undertaken on such vulnerable subjects if the required information can be obtained by other means.
6. Information obtained in the course of research which may reveal the identity of a participant is confidential unless the participant agrees to its release.

### **Researchers and society as a whole.**

The University is committed to conducting research which will contribute to health and quality of life and which strives to serve humanity and South African society as a whole rather than any sectional interests.

The University of Cape Town recognises society's right of timely access to research findings and to open debate on their implications.

### **Researchers and the sponsors of research.**

Research, which is undertaken on behalf of sponsors, is subject to the usual conventions of contract research. Remuneration arrangements for subjects and researchers should be outlined in the contract. Conflicts of interest should be avoided, and all researchers should be asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest. Interference on the part of sponsors, which may jeopardise the integrity of the research, is not acceptable.

Information which reveals the identify of individual participants in the research will not be supplied to the sponsors other than with the permission of individual research subjects.

In its dealings with the sponsors of research, UCT is committed to upholding the principle that findings should be made responsibly and freely available to the public within a specified and limited timeframe.

UCT is committed to upholding this code, but recognises that as research is a human endeavour it is also dependent on discretionary decisions for which individual researchers must accept ethical and scholarly responsibility. The scholarly and ethical standards of researchers are central to the research endeavour and efforts to sustain and develop these are integral components of research at the University of Cape Town. This code and the more detailed versions available within Medicine\* and other disciplines aim to be more educative than coercive; but minimal procedural standards must also be set.

Ethical reasoning requires thought, insight and sensitivity. As with scholarly work, peer review is important. In the case of ethics, peer review includes the larger intellectual community, society at large, and research subjects. Seeking ethical approval should be seen as an opportunity for informed ethical reflection and discussion with ethical peers.

In this spirit approval will be required in terms of the principles of this Code of Research, as supplemented by specific disciplinary codes, for;

- (i) all research projects undertaken by staff and students of the University involving the participation of human subjects;
- (ii) all research projects undertaken by staff and students of the University being likely to have significant social consequences;
- (iii) all research projects by researchers external to the university involving the members of the University as subjects.

from the Faculty committees charged with responsibility for research ethics and reporting to the Code of Ethics for Researchers Committee.

\*See Medical Research Guidelines on Ethics for Medical Research (SA Medical Research Council, 1993)