



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Where leaders learn

RHODES UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

SOP 3.2 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT / NON-COMPLIANCE / UNETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

Approved by:	Name	Signature	Date
Human Research Ethics Committee	Dr Janet Hayward (Chair)		26/02/2024
Endorsed by:			
VC Legal Unit	Mr Ismail Amojee		08/03/2024
DVC: RISP	Dr Kwezi Mzilikazi		12/03/2024

COMPILED BY Prof Roman Tandlich (Chair of RU Animal Research Ethics Committee) and Dr Janet Hayward, (Chair of RU Human Research Ethics Committee).

DOCUMENT HISTORY
Version 1.0 (February 2024)

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT / NON-COMPLIANCE / UNETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to clearly define the processing of whistleblower submissions in relation to suspected misconduct, non-compliance or unethical conduct by Rhodes University researchers or students in their interactions with human participants.

2. Context

- 2.1. Rhodes University adheres to the highest standards and the best practices, locally and internationally, in the interaction with human participants in research.
- 2.2. Research with human participants conducted by Rhodes University staff and students are governed by the Department of Health (DoH) Guidelines (2015, 2024), the Rhodes University Policy on Research Ethics – Human participants (2021) and other relevant legislation on human research ethics.
- 2.3. If such principles are compromised and any members of the Rhodes University community, a stakeholder outside of Rhodes University, or the South African public at large feel that this is the case, then such a person can use the mechanisms in this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to report their concerns or to seek recourse.
- 2.4. Mechanisms for reporting suspected unethical conduct by Rhodes University researchers and students, and measures for protecting those making such disclosures are described here.

3. Reporting of suspected misconduct / non-compliance or unethical conduct

- 3.1 If the complainant chooses to be named, then they can email the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC) Chairperson.
- 3.2 If the complainant prefers to remain anonymous, the Rhodes University Ethics Webpage provides a mechanism for reporting unethical conduct through the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc2ZFg2YAWsvn6KuWRNiIHRoljm2mz1_kaO7PyyvBPthySsRw/viewform?pli=1 Whether the submission is made anonymously or not will have no impact on the decision.
- 3.3 Alternatively, the Rhodes University whistleblowing hotline facilitated by KPMG FairCall can be used to report unethical research involving human participants. The procedure to lodge a complaint through this hotline is as follows:
 - 1) Dial 0800 737 678 toll-free from any Telkom landline within the borders of South Africa. Calls made from cellular telephones will be charged at standard service provider rates.
 - 2) The call centre is manned on a 24-hour basis so employees who are afraid of being overheard using telephones in the office may call from home after-hours.
 - 3) Callers may remain anonymous.
 - 5) Callers will be given a reference number which should be kept in case they make a follow-up call to report additional information or request feedback on the original call.
- 3.4. Additional Hotline reporting avenues:
 - 1) Fax: 0800 200 796 within the borders of SA.

- 2) Mail: KPMG Hotpost, PO Box 14671, Sinoville, Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA, 0129
- 3) E-mail: hotline@kpmg.co.za
- 4) Website: www.thornhill.co.za/kpmgfaircallreport

3.5. Submissions to the whistleblower hotline are forwarded to the Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, who will drive the processing of the submission in line with Rhodes University policies, and the relevant protected disclosure acts.¹²³ Outcomes of the Whistleblowing submissions are then processed through appropriate Rhodes University channels.

4. Information to be provided by whistleblowers / complainants

The following information should be provided:

- 1) Nature of complaint, dispute, or disagreement (referred to as concern in further text) they are raising in terms of human ethics and in relation to Rhodes University.
- 2) Events or factors that contributed to the precipitation of the concern.
- 3) Exact location where the incident occurred.
- 4) Details of what transpired and the timeline, number of occurrences.
- 5) Names of people involved.
- 6) Negative impacts / harms perpetrated.
- 7) Link to any pieces of South African legislation that might have been violated, if known or applicable.
- 8) Estimated amount of money involved if applicable

5. Dealing with allegations of misconduct, non-compliance, or unethical research practice

All complaints received that allege misconduct, non-compliance or unethical research practice are to be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in SOP 3.3 CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE / PROTOCOL VIOLATION / UNETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

6. Outcomes of Whistleblowing complaints

6.1 The appellate authority to any outcome is the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University.

6.2 Any decisions in line with this SOP and that are made by the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University are final in the scope of the Rhodes University structures.

6.3 Any further recourse must take place outside of Rhodes University, e.g. in a court of law of the Republic of South Africa.

7. Effective date of this SOP

26th February 2024 with the next revision date being 26th February 2027, or as deemed necessary by a quorate meeting of RU-HREC.

¹ Government Gazette No. 21453. Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2000 [internet]. Cape Town: Government of South Africa [updated 2000 Aug 07; date cited 2020 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a26-000.pdf.

² Government Gazette No. 41016. Protected Disclosures Amendment Act 2017 [internet]. Cape Town: Government of South Africa [updated 2017 Aug 02; date cited 2020 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201708/410162-8-2017act5of2017protecteddisclosuresamendacta.pdf

³ South African Bureau of Standards (SANS, 2021). SANS 10386:2021 (Edition 2): SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STANDARD. SABS, Cape Town, South Africa.