**Ethical Review of Honours Proposals in the Faculty of Humanities, UJ:**

**Proposed Guidelines (March 2025)**

According to UJ policy (Appendix A), all research involving human participants must undergo ethics review by an independent ethics review committee. While the UJ policy and FREC’s SOPs (Appendix B) have been applied for the review of master's and PhD proposals, this has not been the case for Honours proposals. Various challenges experienced with respect to the review of Honours proposals in 2024 necessitate the drafting of the following proposed guidelines to streamline the Honours review processes:

1. **The Review Committee**

The FREC is to form a sub-committee to review Honours proposals. The sub-committee would comprise members of the FREC, and Honours Research Coordinators from most/each department. The Departmental Honours Research Coordinators would have to undergo ethics training through the FREC, prior to serving on the sub-committee. The sub-committee would operate in line with the SOPs of the FREC. The committee would be chaired by the Chairperson or a Vice-Chairperson of the FREC. The sub-committee will have the responsibility of reviewing and approving Honours applications.

1. **Sub-Committee Meetings**

All Honours proposals involving human participants would have to be submitted for review during the first semester of the year for one of the two sittings of the Honours review sub-committee. There would be no other opportunities for submission of proposals after these dates. The two deadline dates would be as follows:

1. By the end of March (Term 1)
2. By the end of May (Term 2)
3. **Proposal formats**

Both of the following formats would be acceptable:

1. Group proposals: These would be of studies involving more than one student and are strongly encouraged.
2. Individual proposals: These would be of studies of individual students.
3. **Submission Documents**
4. A full proposal, using the Honours proposal template (Appendix C)
5. Attachments:
   1. An invitation sheet and informed consent form
   2. Completed POPIA Personal Information Impact Assessment (PIIA) form
   3. Completed POPIA information sheet and informed consent form (where necessary)
   4. Draft interview guides/questionnaires/data collection sheets
6. **Types of Research Topics**

While the nature of the research conducted by departments varies, and the research ethics committee will not prescribe the types of research conducted by Honours students, the following types of research are encouraged:

* Studies involving non-vulnerable populations[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Studies involving non-sensitive topics (to be determined by the applicant/supervisor)
* Studies not involving the collection and processing of personal information
* Studies not involving minors (those under the age of 18 years), as parental/guardian consent is usually required for minors involved in research studies
* Studies for which extra layers of permission (e.g. Department of Education, Health) would not be required.

1. **How to Submit Honours Proposals**

The dedicated FREC email address must be used: [humanitiesethics@uj.ac.za](mailto:humanitiesethics@uj.ac.za).

1. **Training and Review at Departmental level**

It is recommended that departments provide ethics training for their Honours students and that the proposals undergo a pre-review process (e.g. departmental seminars or other review process) prior to submission to the FREC.

1. According to the South African Ethics in Health Research Guidelines on page 28 (<https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/NDoH-2024-Health-Research-Guidelines-3rdEdition-v0.1.pdf>), vulnerability refers to having a “diminished ability to fully safeguard one’s own interests in the context of a specific research project; may be caused by limited capacity or limited access to social goods like rights, opportunities, and power”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)