







NWU-EMELTEN-REC



The Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office of the North-West University is acknowledged for the use of their document with minor adjustments made by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC).

North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC)		Standard Operating Procedure	
Title	SOP for complaints management		
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Date of approval	22 September 2017	Revision date	22 September 2021
Email address	Ethics-EMELTEN@nwu.ac.za	Page no	Page 1 to 7

1 COMPILATION AND AUTHORISATION

Action	Designated person	Signature	Date
Compiled by: Prof Minrie Greeff and amended by Prof Lukas Meyer	Prof Lukas Meyer		6 December 2016
Revised and Checked by:	NWU-EMELTEN-REC Research Ethics Office: Prof Lukas Meyer		1 December 2018 4 September 2019
Approved by:	NWU-EMELTEN-REC Chair: Prof Lukas Meyer		9 March 2020
	Faculty Board: Faculty of Education Chair: Prof Lloyd Conley		15 April 2020
	SCRE Chair:		27 August 2020
Authorised by:	Chair of NWU-EMELTEN-REC: Prof Lukas Meyer		28 August 2020

2 DISTRIBUTION

Department/Unit	Name	Signature	Date
Chairperson on behalf of EMHS-REC	Prof Lukas Meyer		28 August 2020
Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation			
NWU-EMELTEN-REC Administrator	Mrs Villera le Roux		31 August 2020

3 DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version no	Reason for revision
6 December 2016	1	Compiling of SOP
7 May 2018	2	Changing old NWU Logo to new NWU Logo
1 December 2018	3	Changing committee's name EMHS-REC to NWU-EMELTEN-REC
4 September 2019	4	Revision of documents

4 PURPOSE OF THE SOP

This SOP provides guidelines for the management of three types of complaints:

1. Complaints from researchers about a member of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC or the NWU-EMELTEN-REC itself
2. Complaints from a member of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC or the NWU-EMELTEN-REC itself about a researcher
3. Complaints received from a research participant, co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about research conduct and/or the researcher.

During any investigation of complaints, the NWU-EMELTEN-REC and NWU-EMELTEN-REC will adhere to the following principles:

- *Fairness*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Integrity*
- *Prevention of detriment*

5 SCOPE

Notwithstanding this complaint procedure, processes will comply with National Regulations, including that the Chair of an Ethics Committee retains the right to immediately suspend or terminate any research study that violates National Regulations.

6 ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation/definition	Description
NWU-EMELTEN-REC	North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee

NWU-EMELTEN-REO	North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Office
NWU	North-West University
Complaint	Refers to any action of NWU-EMELTEN-REC, a NWU-EMELTEN-REC member, researcher, co-researcher, research assistant, research participant, or interested community member about dissatisfaction with research related activities which they wish to take forward in a formal manner.

7 RESPONSIBILITIES

This SOP provides guidelines for the NWU-EMELTEN-REC, a NWU-EMELTEN-REC member, researcher, co-researcher, research assistant, research participant, or interested community member on how to handle any dissatisfaction related to research related activities.

8 PROCEDURE/S

8.1 Procedure for complaints from researchers about a member of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC or the NWU-EMELTEN-REC itself

Should a researcher/post-graduate student experience a problem with a specific NWU-EMELTEN-REC member's behaviour or the NWU-EMELTEN-REC itself regarding meeting procedures, application management or reviewer report/s, they have the opportunity to lodge a complaint.

The complaint should be lodged in writing to the chairperson of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC (Lukas.Meyer@nwu.ac.za).

Such a written complaint will initiate the following process:

A meeting will immediately be constituted with the complainant, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC and the member to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. If the complainant is a post-graduate student the study-leader will be included in this discussion. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the NWU-EMELTEN-REO. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible with the complainant, the Dean, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC, the member and the Director of the applicable research entity to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the NWU-EMELTEN-REO. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant may approach the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) to lodge the unresolved complaint, also providing proof that the aforementioned internal mediation process was followed and unsuccessful. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC.

The complaint and its outcome will be reported during the following NWU-EMELTEN-REC meeting.

Flow diagram 1: Procedure for complaints from researchers



Should a member of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC or the NWU-EMELTEN-REC itself experience a problem with a specific researcher’s behaviour or research actions, they have the opportunity to lodge a complaint.

The complaint should be lodged in writing to the chairperson of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC (Lukas.Meyer@nwu.ac.za).

Such a written complaint will initiate the following process:

A meeting will immediately be constituted with the complainant, the researcher, as well as the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC discuss the complaint about the researcher in an attempt to find an amicable solution, and to communicate the problem and consequences to the researcher in the most appropriate way. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the NWU-EMELTEN-REC and kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible between the complainant, and the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC, and the researcher to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the NWU-EMELTEN-REC which will be kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

A meeting will be called as soon as possible with the researcher, the complainant, the Dean, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC, and the Director of the applicable research entity to discuss the complaint in an attempt to find an amicable solution. A written report of this meeting will be compiled by the NWU-EMELTEN-REC which will be kept on file. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

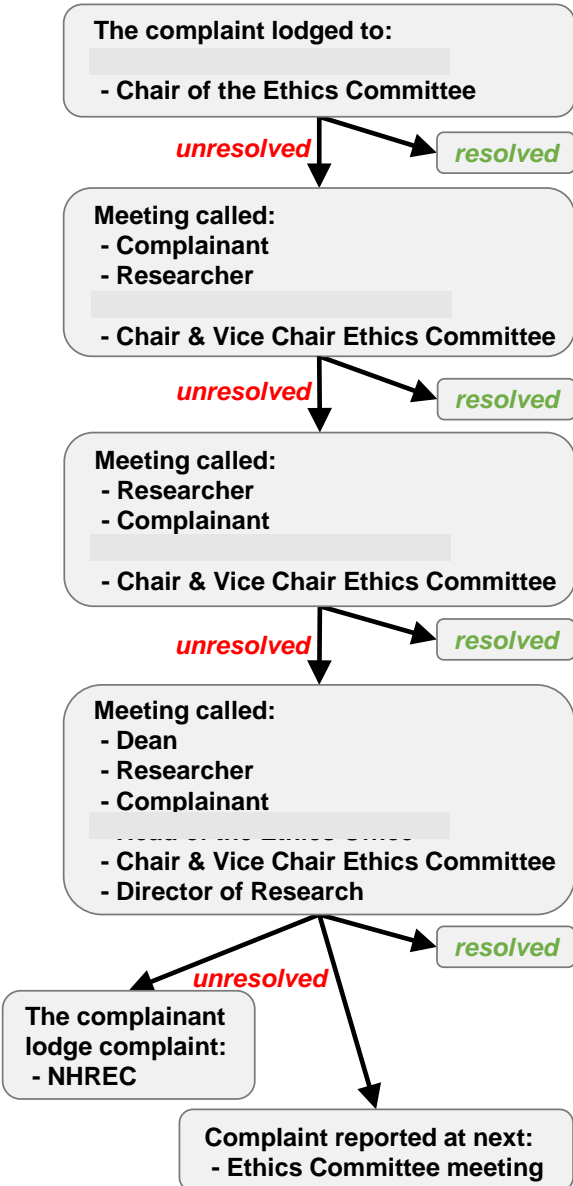
If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant may approach the NHREC to lodge the unresolved complaint, also providing proof that the aforementioned internal mediation process was followed and unsuccessful. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC. Should the researcher feel unfairly treated he/she can follow the internal process and if unresolved also approach the NHREC.

The complaint and its outcome will be reported during the following NWU-EMELTEN-REC meeting.

8.2 Complaints from a member of NWU-EMELTEN-REC or NWU-EMELTEN-REC about a researcher

Flow diagram 2: Procedure for complaints from REC members



8.3 Procedure for complaints received from a research participant, co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about research conduct and/or the researcher

In the informed consent documentation, clear reference is made to either the researcher or the applicable NWU-EMELTEN-REC secretariat that should be contacted if a research participant has any queries or complaints regarding either the research conduct or the researcher.

Likewise, a complaint can be lodged by a co-researcher, research assistant, or interested community member about the research conducted itself and/or the researcher.

These complaints should be received in the form of a written letter, e-mail or phone call. When such a complaint is received, the chairperson of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC should be contacted immediately and a plan of action devised.

The minimum plan of action should include:

1. Immediately making contact with the complainant via telephone (preferred if available) plus e-mail if available (to have key deliberations on record).
2. If possible, an immediate meeting should be set up with the complainant.
3. The researcher is contacted immediately and requested to supply the Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC with a written report.

A separate meeting is set up between the Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC and the researcher.

The outcome of the two meetings (one with the complainant and one with the researcher) will inform the necessity of a further meeting as soon as possible where the researcher, the complainant, the Chair of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC will finalise the complaint.

Should this not be achievable, a final meeting between all parties mentioned previously, as well as the Dean and the Director of the applicable research entity will be constituted as soon as possible in an attempt to find an amicable solution.

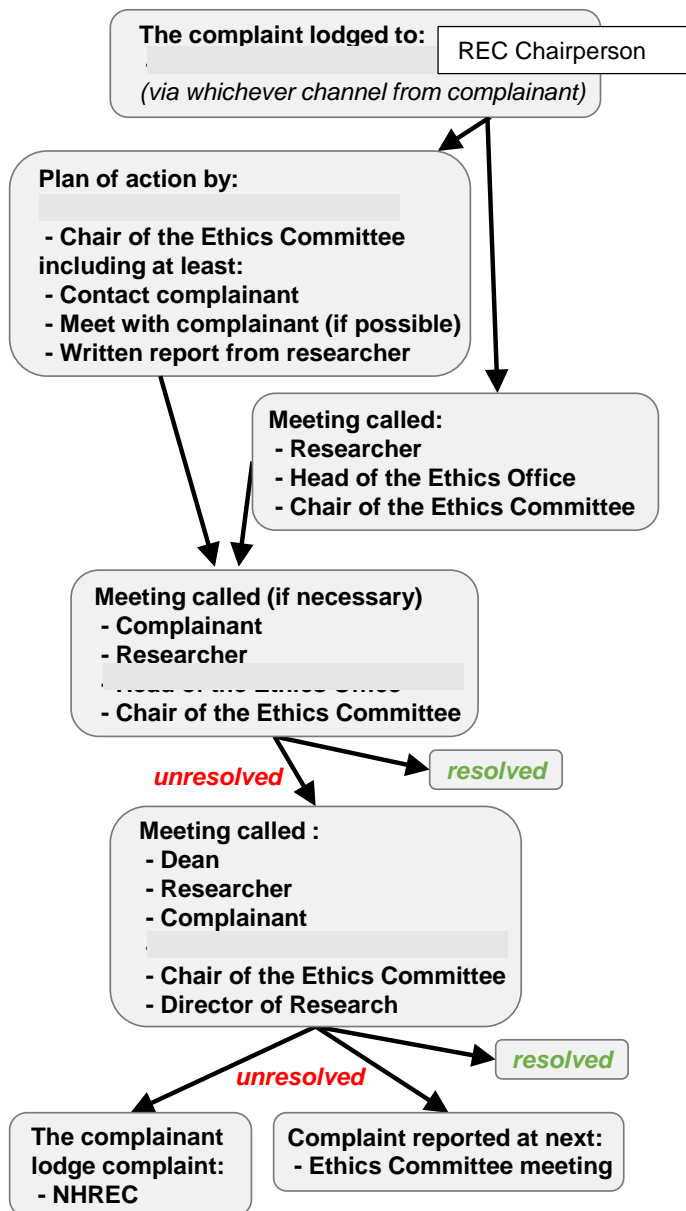
A detailed written report of the aforementioned processes and outcomes will be compiled by the involved persons (chairperson of the NWU-EMELTEN-REC) and circulated for correctness and fairness. If a mutual agreement regarding a workable solution is reached, the matter will be regarded resolved.

If not, the process will proceed to the next phase as described below:

The complainant shall be advised about his/her right to contact the NHREC. The procedure is available on the webpage of the NHREC and all necessary contact information shall be provided to the complainant.

The complaint and outcome will be reported during the following NWU-EMELTEN-REC meeting.

Flow diagram 3: Procedure for complaints about research conduct



9 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Guideline for the Management of Complaints, Complaints and Advisory Disciplinary Committee (CADC), NHREC, February 2015.

10 ADDENDA

No	Document name