

Registration of a Research Ethics Committee (REC) with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC)

To: Prospective Applicants

Date: 14 November 2025

We appreciate your interest in registering your Research Ethics Committee (REC) with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC). Before proceeding with your application, please ensure that you have carefully read the NHREC statement (Page 2) and reviewed the Application to Register form (AREC or HREC) available on the NHREC website.

The accompanying NHREC Statement, signed by the Minister of Health, Dr Matsoaledi, on 2 October 2025, outlines important information for applicants seeking registration of a REC with the NHREC.

Please note the following:

1. **Mandatory Registration:**
If your application relates to a REC (Animal or Human) that reviews human health research, it is essential to proceed with registration with the NHREC to ensure compliance with the National Health Act (NHA) (Act 61 of 2003).
2. **Scope of Applications:**
Going forward, applications from RECs whose scope does not align with the mandate of the NHREC, as defined by the NHA, will no longer be accepted.
3. **Alignment with NHREC Mandate:**
The application form requires a clear description of the types of health or health-related research your REC reviews or will review and monitor. Your submission must demonstrate how these activities fall within the mandate of the NHREC. Only applications that clearly align with the NHA and the NHREC's scope will be considered for registration.

Regards, Penelope Engel-Hills

Chairperson: NHREC



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Statement: The NHREC – Registration of Research Ethics Committees

This notice concerns the mandate and capacity of the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) regarding the registration of Research Ethics Committees (RECs) that do not review health or health-related research.

The NHREC operates under the National Health Act (NHA), which provides a defined mandate and structure. This framework does not support the unlimited registration of an ever-increasing number of RECs, particularly those outside the scope of health research.

The NHREC remains committed to registering and overseeing all RECs (Human and Animal) that review health research, and this will continue with due diligence. However, the interpretation of "health-related research" has, over time, extended beyond what is reasonably considered health-focused. This has led to frustration and discontent from RECs and researchers for being compelled to abide by guidelines not directed at their research area, as well as numerous requests for leniency by registered RECs that do not fall within the NHREC's mandate.

The NHREC will retain the registration of currently registered RECs outside the health domain, should they choose to maintain their registration. However, going forward, applications from RECs whose scope does not align with the NHREC's mandate will no longer be accepted.

Should further information or clarification be required, please do not hesitate to contact the NHREC at nhrec@health.gov.za

Yours Sincerely


DR PA MOTSOLEDI, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH

DATE:

2/10/2025