



**Faculty of Health Sciences: Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support**  
**Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom, South Africa 2520**  
**Tel: 018 299 2092**  
**Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za**

## **COMMUNIQUE: NO 2**

### **FUNCTIONING OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES ETHICS OFFICE DURING THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN**

**24 March 2020**

---

Dear Staff and Students

In light of the announcement by the President last night regarding the National Lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to inform all the staff and students that make use of our services, what the impact will be on the functioning of the Health Sciences Ethics Office during this time. The decisions indicated below have not been taken lightly and have been made in collaboration with the office of the Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Please be assured that the Health Sciences Ethics Office will always be at your service but there are certain realities that we will have to face during this time:

1. Firstly, the NWU-HREC meeting scheduled for the 16th April 2020 and the NWU-AnimCareREC meeting which is scheduled for 31 March 2020, will be postponed until further notice. These meetings will be re-scheduled and the dates communicated to all staff and students, once we have clarity on how long the Lockdown will continue. This decision is also in accordance with the directive received from the Senate Committee for Research Ethics (SCRE).
2. Secondly, we will continue for now, with the processing of any expedited reviews, no risk studies, or in process applications i.e. those applications that have already undergone the initial round of review, that we receive. We will also continue with the passive monitoring of the research projects currently running, although all scheduled active monitoring sessions during the Lockdown have been cancelled. Please be aware that the turnaround times on these processes may have to be extended, due to the realities of the National Lockdown, because the staff members and reviewers may be dealing with issues of childcare, illness etc.
3. Thirdly, the staff members within the Health Sciences Ethics Office, including myself, will be working remotely during the National Lockdown, and will be able to answer any queries that you may have. However, we ask that as far as possible, that all queries are submitted via e mail rather than telephonically.
4. Fourthly, in terms of consultations, I would like to indicate that any new consultation requests will, unfortunately, only be scheduled once the National Lockdown is over. If there are any

emergency situations, however, that cannot be handled by e-mail, please communicate this with me and we will arrange a discussion accordingly.

5. Fifthly, we are in the process of instituting a contingency plan for both the NWU-Vivarium and the NWU-Aquarium facilities to grant certain key staff members access to these facilities during the Lockdown, to ensure the livelihood of the animals during this time. The health of the animals within these facilities are of great importance to us and will be managed accordingly.

We appreciate your understanding of the necessity for these arrangements. I again re-iterate that the Health Sciences Ethics Office remains at your service and will continue to assist all staff and students as far as is possible during this uncertain time. Please let us know at your earliest convenience, should you have any queries. We wish all staff and students and their families, health and strength during the upcoming weeks. May you all be safe and well.

**Issued by: The Head of the Ethics Office, Chairpersons of NWU-HREC and NWU-AnimCareREC and research ethics advisor**