

University of Cape Town (UCT) Policy Statement on Safeguarding in Research

Title	University of Cape Town (UCT) Policy Statement on Safeguarding in Research
Approval date	Senate, through PC07/2022 Council, at meeting 15 October 2022
Person(s) responsible for drafting, review, and revision	Lyn Horn (Director, ORI)
Next review date	October 2027
Status	Policy statement
Approval route	EIRC/URC > SEC > Senate > Council
Approving body	Senate then Council

Table of Contents

UCT Policy Statement on Safeguarding in Research.....	2
Definitions.....	2
Principles of Safeguarding	2
Reporting of Safeguarding Concerns	3

UCT Policy Statement on Safeguarding in Research¹

In the context of research, the term 'safeguarding' means that all those involved in the research endeavour, including researchers, support staff, affiliated students, other team members, and research participants, will be protected from a variety of harms that can arise particularly when there are power imbalances in relationships. Such harms include exploitation, bullying and abuse, sexual harassment, racial and gender discrimination. Safeguarding is particularly applicable to children, young adults, and vulnerable adults.

By implication this means that responsible parties must ensure that adequate training and resources are put in place to uphold this responsibility.

UCT is committed to uphold the aims of safeguarding and has demonstrated its commitment by enacting a range of policies that support safeguarding activities. These policies should be read in conjunction with this statement:

- [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#)
- [Research Ethics Code for Research Involving Human Participants](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Policy on Anti-Racism, Racial Discrimination and Racial Harassment](#)
- [Social Responsiveness Policy](#)

Definitions

Abuse: To treat someone improperly to bad effect or for a bad purpose and includes misuse.

Child: A person under the age of 18

Harm: To cause hurt or injury to persons or groups that can be emotional or psychological, physical, social, or socio-economic.

Vulnerable adult: A person who due to context or circumstance may be disempowered or easily exploited.

Responsible party includes the institution, as well as research project leaders, principal investigators, and others in similar research leadership positions.

Principles of Safeguarding

The following principles have been adapted to the research context and should form the foundation of safeguarding activities.^{1, 2}

1. Empowerment: Identifying power imbalances in relationships within research contexts and finding mechanisms to empower those affected.
2. Prevention: Identifying contexts where harm could take place and putting steps in place to prevent this.
3. Proportionality: Action should be in proportion to the issue that has arisen and as unintrusive as possible, while still being effective.

¹ Developing a Safeguarding policy: A Guide. Scotland's International Development Alliance. The checklist in this document was used to ensure that funder-required components of this policy statement are present.

² <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/six-principles>

4. Protection: Confidentiality, support and representation should be provided to those affected by harms, including whistleblowers.
5. Partnership: Research team members across collaborations should work together to ensure that safeguarding activities are implemented consistently across different environments.
6. Conflict of Interest: Avoidance of conflict of interest and power differentials when responding to safeguarding concerns is essential.
7. Accountability: There should be both accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Reporting of Safeguarding Concerns

Research environments (for example centres, units, teams, institutes) must establish mechanisms for dealing with safeguarding concerns in a manner that upholds the principles articulated above. This may involve developing a safeguarding Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for a particular research unit or project. This should include ensuring that processes for raising concerns are communicated effectively to all stakeholders and mechanisms are available to receive such concerns, maintain confidentiality and respond adequately. Where appropriate, processes defined in the relevant policies listed above should be followed.