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## Africa University Research Ethics Committee (AUREC)

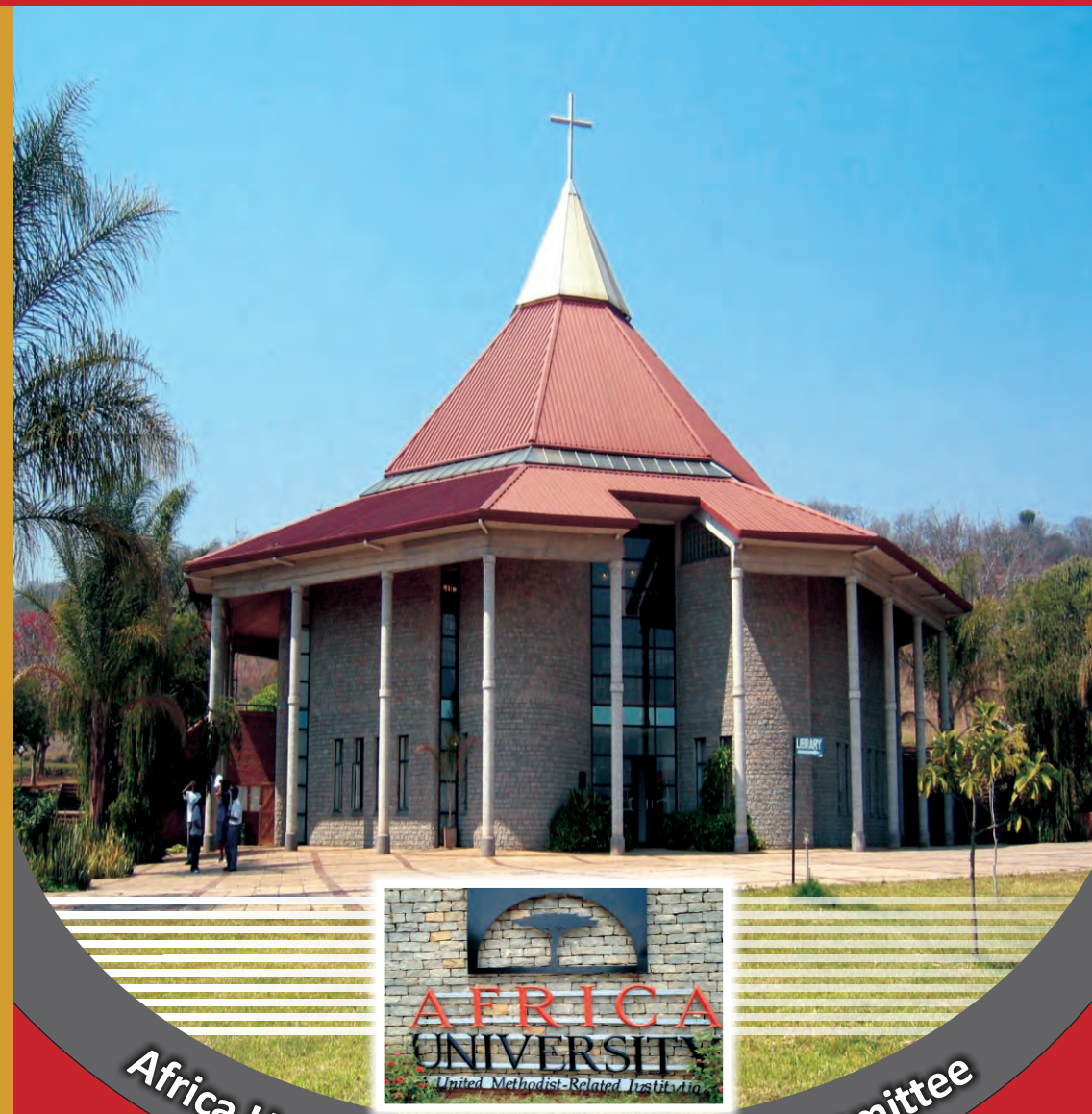
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Africa University Research Ethics Committee



# AUREC



**A**frica University has recently established an institution-wide research ethics body called Africa University Research Ethics Committee (AUREC)

### What is a Research Ethics Committee?

A research ethics committee (REC) is a formally constituted body established by an institution to review the ethical and scientific merits of research that involves human participants. RECs are also known as Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), Ethics Review Boards (ERBs) or Ethics Review Committees (ERCs) in different parts of the world. Some RECs also cover research involving animals.

### What are the functions of AUREC?

AUREC exists to ensure that all research conducted on human beings (and animals) under the auspices of Africa University meets the highest ethical and scientific standards. This is in order to safeguard the safety, rights, dignity and well-being of humans (and animals) that may participate in research. The main aim is to protect human participants from harm during their participation in research. Harm is not only physical, but can also be social, psychological, emotional, financial, etc. Therefore RECs do not only review biomedical research projects, but any research where data is collected from human participants. This includes social science, behavioural and other research.

### How will it achieve its mandate?

AUREC will achieve its mandate by providing independent and timely review of the ethics and science of proposed research studies at AU. In doing this, AUREC may approve research protocols, suggest modifications in research proposals or if absolutely necessary, reject some research proposals. AUREC will also monitor on-going, previously approved research studies to ensure that ethical standards are maintained throughout the course of the study. AUREC will review research proposed or conducted by faculty, staff and students at AU, or persons from outside institutions who wish to carry out research at or with AU. AUREC will also act as a resource on matters of research ethics,

providing guidance, information and/or training to faculty, staff, students and other relevant stakeholders.

### Who regulates the AUREC?

The AUREC is answerable to the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ) which functions as the national research ethics committee. Within Africa University, AUREC's operational and administrative requirements are arranged through the university's Office of Research and Outreach Programmes.

### Of what benefit is it?

AUREC gives an institution such as AU and its affiliates the assurance and confidence that all research that is conducted complies with local and international ethical standards and guidelines. AUREC will also ensure that the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of research participants are protected. Many sponsors are reluctant to fund research at an institution where there is no REC to give assurance of compliance with set norms and standards. As a result, many publishers are now considering only research that has been approved by RECs as a condition for accepting manuscripts for publication.

### Where is AUREC located?

Currently, the AUREC is housed in the Faculty of Health Sciences Building.

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### What is the Composition of AUREC?

The establishment of this body at AU was overseen by a University wide Project Implementation Committee (PIC). AUREC is currently made of 9 members, the majority of whom are from Africa University, and some are from outside the institution. The members vary in age, gender and are from various professional and disciplines to promote diversity. These members, together with the AUREC secretariat have had extensive training in research ethics, and continue to undergo capacity building to ensure quality service delivery.