



CODE OF CONDUCT SOP, JULY 2026, V3

Research Ethics
Committee

Final Version	Reason for Amendment	Effective Date
3	[To be completed]	July 2026
2	Updated and published for implementation	October 2023
	Administrative changes	March 2024

Members must affirm this undertaking annually at the first meeting of the calendar year

1. INTRODUCTION

The SAMAREC Code of Conduct provides guidance on responsible and expected behaviour of SAMAREC members who, have undertaken to perform their role and execute their responsibilities with integrity, in an ethical, honest, and professional manner, as provided for in this Code.

This Code expresses SAMAREC's commitment to consolidate the institutional image of SAMAREC as an example of integrity, accountability, and professional ethical standards, relating to SAMAREC members *inter se*, as well as their relationship with SAMAREC and stakeholders. It also serves as a pledge to uphold the principles and guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) as well as the NDoH Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (2024).

2. SAMAREC MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Members must uphold the highest ethical standards in all research activities, this includes, but is not limited to respecting the rights, dignity, and autonomy of the research participants. This encourages the public to trust that SAMAREC is acting in a manner that protects the community and research participants.
- 2.2 Members must ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, regulations, and guidelines governing research in South Africa. SAMAREC's practices must always be in line with applicable national and international legal and ethical requirements.
- 2.3 Members must demonstrate integrity, honesty, good judgement, and professionalism; and perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny; this obligation is not necessarily fully discharged simply by acting within the law.
- 2.4 Members must always exercise independence and impartiality. Protocols and amendments must be reviewed objectively; this serves in avoiding conflicts of interest that may compromise impartial decision-making.
- 2.5 Members must disclose fully any private or professional interests that could affect their decision making or that could present a potential conflict of interest and put ethical practice at risk. All conflicts of interest must be disclosed to SAMAREC and managed according to the Conflict of Interest procedures of SAMAREC.
- 2.6 Members must ensure and maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants, all confidential information must be used for authorised purposes, and in line with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act of 2013.
- 2.7 Members must ensure that they review the informed consent process for research participation, confirming they meet ethical and legal requirements.
- 2.8 Members must evaluate potential risks associated with research protocols and implement appropriate measures to minimise harm to the research participants. The potential benefits and risks must be weighed to ensure the ethical justification of the research activities.
- 2.9 Members must conduct thorough and timely reviews of research proposals, protocols, and amendments.

Clear and transparent communication with researchers must be maintained throughout the review process.

Members must adhere to the meeting dates, as per the Standing Operating Procedures, and must maintain punctuality at meetings.

- 2.10 SAMAREC must establish procedures for handling and investigating allegations of research misconduct and ethical violations in accordance with best practices, as well as promote a responsible conduct of research and take allegations of research misconduct and ethical violations seriously.
- 2.11 SAMAREC must provide training and educational resources to members on research ethics, regulations, and emerging ethical issues. The promotion of ongoing professional development will enhance SAMAREC's expertise and knowledge.
- 2.12 SAMAREC must ensure that it reports to relevant authorities, such as the NHREC, as required, regarding all activities and decisions. SAMAREC must maintain accurate records of meetings, decisions, and communications for auditing and accountability purposes.
- 2.13 For continuous improvement, SAMAREC should encourage feedback and suggestions from members, researchers, and stakeholders, to enhance the effectiveness of the committee's work. This includes regularly assessing and improving SAMAREC's processes, policies, and guidelines to align with evolving ethical standards and regulatory requirements.
- 2.14 In addition to initial ethics review, SAMAREC members have an ongoing responsibility to ensure continuous ethical oversight of approved research in accordance with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) requirements and the National Department of Health Ethics in Health Research Guidelines (2024). This includes the review of amendments, progress reports, adverse events, protocol deviations, and new information that may affect the ethical acceptability of a study. Members must remain vigilant to emerging ethical risks associated with evolving research methodologies, including data-intensive research, artificial intelligence, genomic and biobank research, and the secondary use of data and human biological materials. Where applicable, members must ensure that clinical trials comply with latest South African Good Clinical Practice requirements throughout the life cycle of the study. SAMAREC acknowledges the regulatory authority of the NHREC and undertakes to cooperate fully with NHREC audits, reporting obligations, and complaint-handling processes to ensure accountability, transparency, and the continued protection of research participants and communities.

3. MANAGEMENT OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE AND QUORUM

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish the required standards for REC member attendance, quorum management, and related governance controls. This ensures uninterrupted ethical oversight, compliance with national regulatory frameworks, and the timely review of research protocols.

3.2 Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to:

- All appointed REC members (clinical, non-clinical, and community/lay representatives)
- The SAMAREC Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson
- The SAMAREC Secretariat

- Any alternate or substitute members appointed by the Committee.

3.3. Definitions

Absenteeism: Non-attendance at scheduled SAMAREC meetings without valid prior notification.

Quorum: The minimum composition of SAMAREC membership required for a meeting to conduct official business.

Secretariat: Administrative support personnel responsible for SAMAREC operations.

3.4 Responsibilities

3.4.1 SAMAREC Members

- Attend scheduled meetings as required.
- Notify the Secretariat in advance if unable to attend.
- Notify the Secretariat in advance when unable to review protocol.
- Comply with membership commitment obligations (attendance, confidentiality, review duties, conflict of interest requirements).

3.4.2 Chairperson / Deputy Chairperson

- Review and address patterns of absenteeism.
- Recommend corrective action, replacement, or suspension where necessary.

3.4.3 Secretariat

- Maintain the attendance register and monitoring dashboard.
- Issue meeting notices and attendance confirmations.
- Activate alternate members when quorum is at risk.

3.5 Procedure

3.5.1 Attendance Requirements

- All members are expected to attend at least 75% of the scheduled 12 SAMAREC meetings per calendar year.
- Two or three consecutive absences without valid explanation will trigger a formal review by the Chairperson.
- Members must communicate anticipated absences to the Secretariat and/or Chairperson as early as possible.
- Persistent absenteeism may result in:
 - Temporary suspension of duties
 - Replacement or termination of membership

Objective: To ensure meeting stability, accountability, and protection of quorum.

3.6 Quorum Requirements

A SAMAREC meeting is quorate only when the following members are present:

- Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson;
- At least one clinical member;
- At least one nonclinical member;
- At least one community or lay representative.

When quorum is not achieved:

- No protocol decisions, votes, or approvals may occur.
- Reviews may be discussed but approval of decisions **must be deferred** to a future quorate meeting.

This protects the legal and ethical validity of SAMAREC decisions.

3.7 Re-Meeting Attendance Confirmation

The Secretariat shall implement a **72-hour confirmation rule**:

- Issue meeting reminders **3–5 days** prior to each meeting.
- Obtain member attendance confirmations within the specified timeframe.
- If quorum is at risk, activate alternate members or make contingency arrangements in advance.

Purpose: To prevent last-minute quorum failures and ensure operational continuity.

3.8 Meeting Schedule Publication

1. The Secretariat must publish the full **annual SAMAREC meeting calendar at least 12 months in advance**.
2. Members are required to block these dates to minimise scheduling conflicts.

3.9 Minimum Membership Buffer

To ensure governance resilience, SAMAREC shall maintain more members than the minimum required by national guidelines.

3.10 Membership Commitment Agreement

All current and newly appointed REC members must sign an appointment letter, which outlines:

- Attendance expectations
- Protocol review responsibilities
- Confidentiality obligations
- Conflict of interest disclosure and management requirements

3.11 Secretariat Monitoring and Reporting

The Secretariat must maintain an operational dashboard tracking:

- Member attendance and trends
- Quorum risk levels
- Pending and overdue protocol reviews
- Individual member workload distribution

The dashboard should be reviewed routinely by the Chairperson to enable early intervention.

3.12 Records Management

The Secretariat must securely maintain:

- Attendance registers
- Attendance confirmation logs
- Quorum verification records
- Member Commitment Agreements
- Reports on absenteeism and interventions

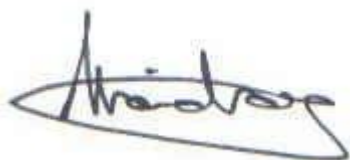
Records must be retained according to SAMAREC's document retention policy and aligned to NHREC guidelines.

3.13 Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with attendance and quorum requirements will be addressed by the Chairperson and may result in:

- Written warning
- Review of membership status
- Suspension or removal from the Committee
- Reporting to institutional authorities if required

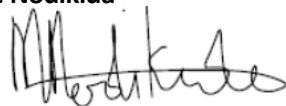
Name of SAMAREC Chairperson: Nasheen Naidoo _____



Date Signed & Signature: _____ 14/06/2026 _____

Witness: _____

SAMA CEO: **Dr Mzulungile Nodikida**



Date Signed & Signature: _____ 26 June 2026 _____