Terms of Reference for the Provincial Health Research Committee of the Department of Health

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1. **Purpose**

1.1. The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to determine the mandate, decision making powers, functions/responsibilities, composition, and work procedures of the Provincial Health Research Committee of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health.

2. **Underlying rationale for the establishment of a Provincial Health Research Committee**

2.1. The National Health Act, No. 61 of 2003 determines that the National Minister of Health must establish a Committee to be known as the National Health Research Committee.

2.2. The role of the National Health Research Committee is to:

   2.2.1. Determine the health research to be carried out by the public health authorities.
   2.2.2. Ensure that health research agendas and research resources focus on priority health problems.
   2.2.3. Develop and advise the National Minister of Health on the application and implementation of an integrated national strategy for health research.
   2.2.4. Coordinate the research activities of public health authorities.

2.3. In terms of the Health Research Policy of the National Department of Health (as approved in 2001) each Provincial Department of Health should establish a Provincial Health Research Committee to oversee the following:

   2.3.1. Co-ordinate health research by liaising with all research stakeholders conducting research within the Province.
   2.3.2. Manage the process of priority setting and assist in the development of health research priorities in the Province.
   2.3.3. Review preliminary and final research reports and to give advice on policy implications of completed research projects.
2.4. In order to give effect to the National Health Research Policy, the Accounting Officer of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, in consultation with the Member of the Executive Council, has appointed a Provincial Health Research Committee.

3. Institutional framework for the Provincial Health Research Committee

3.1. Role of the Provincial Health Research Committee

3.1.1. The Provincial Health Research Committee is responsible for the following:

3.1.1.1. Ascertain the enforcement of ethical considerations on all research activities within the Province in accordance with ethical standards of clinical trials and non-clinical research activities.

3.1.1.2. Liaise with other research institutions with research capabilities.

3.1.1.3. Ensure that research activities conducted are in line with the research priorities of the Province.

3.1.1.4. Provide advice on policy implications of completed research projects.

3.1.1.5. Ensure that the research findings are used to inform the planning imperatives of the Provincial Department and the improvement of health service delivery.

3.1.1.6. Identify and manage health research priorities.

3.1.1.7. Identify gaps in the Department for research by re-defining research priorities.

3.1.1.8. Advise the Accounting Officer of the Department on health research priorities.

3.1.1.9. Provide quarterly reports on research activities to the Directorate: Systems Research, Research Coordination and Epidemiology.

3.1.1.10. Conduct the priority setting process at least every three (3) years with an interim review midway through the cycle.
3.2. Powers of the Provincial Health Research Committee

3.2.1. The Provincial Health Research Committee has authority to:

3.2.1.1. Approve or reject research proposals on behalf of the Provincial Department of Health – that means that the Provincial Health Research Committee is the only Committee in the Province with such powers.

3.2.1.2. Approve or reject research proposals that do not involve any direct testing on patients – that is research that does not involve clinical trials.

3.2.1.3. Approve research proposals that are in line with the Research Policy, Research Strategy, and Research Protocols, of the Provincial Department.

3.2.1.4. Approve research proposals recommended by other institutional Research Committees in the Provincial Department of Health– that is the Research Committees established at Tertiary Hospitals.

3.2.1.5. Make recommendations to the Accounting Officer and Member of the Executive Council of the Provincial Department for approval of research projects that entail clinical trials.

3.2.1.6. Intervene if the researchers are not adhering to the Research Policy and standards of the Provincial and National Departments of Health.

3.2.1.7. Initiate research proposals based on the priority research areas.

3.3. Chairpersonship

3.3.1. The Chairperson of the Provincial Health Research Committee is appointed by the Accounting Officer of the Provincial Department.

3.3.2. The Chairperson is appointed from the members of the Provincial Health Research Committee.

3.3.3. The Chairperson should appoint a person to act as a Chairperson in his or her absence.
3.4. **Powers of the Chairperson**

3.4.1. The Chairperson:

3.4.1.1. Takes responsibility and accountability for the final approval of research proposals that do not involve clinical trials. This approval is granted based on recommendations made by the Health Research and Knowledge Management sub-component.

3.4.1.2. May solicit expert resources for specific research activities.

3.4.1.3. May co-opt any member with an aim of performing certain duties of the Provincial Health Research Committee.

3.4.1.4. May appoint additional members to the Provincial Health Research Committee, if required, based on approval of the Accounting Officer of the Department.

3.4.1.5. Represent the Provincial Health Research Committee in meetings with the National Health Research Committee as and when required.

3.4.1.6. May delegate all these powers to a nominated person.

3.5. **Composition**

3.5.1. The Provincial Health Research Committee is composed of 15 members:

3.5.1.1. The Chairperson

3.5.1.2. General Managers from each of the three (3) service delivery Areas of the Provincial Department of Health;

3.5.1.3. General Manager: Health Policy and Systems Development;

3.5.1.4. General Manager: Health Services Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation;

3.5.1.5. Tertiary institutions – that is one representative from each of the following institutions: the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Zululand, Durban University of Technology and Mangosuthu Technikon;
3.5.1.6. Local community – that is one representative from churches and one representative from traditional healers; and
3.5.1.7. One representative from each of the following: Non-Governmental Organisations, Faith Based Organisations and Non-Profit Organisations.

3.5.2. The members are appointed on a three (3) year basis by the Accounting Officer of the Department.

3.5.3. A vacancy in the Provincial Health Research Committee must be filled by the appointment of a person for the unexpired portion of the term of office of the member in whose place the person is appointed by the Accounting Officer of the Department.

3.5.4. A member of the Provincial Health Research Committee, who is not in the full-time employment of the Public Service, as defined in the Public Service Act 1999, must in respect of his or her service as a member be paid such remuneration as the Accounting Officer of the Department may determine.

3.6. **Meetings of the Provincial Health Research Committee:**

3.6.1. The quorum for a meeting to take place shall be six (6) members including the Chairperson, out of 15 members.

3.6.2. The Chairperson may convene meetings on an ad hoc basis during the initial establishment phase of the Provincial Health Research Committee.

3.6.3. Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis – at least within 15 days after the end of each quarter.

3.7. **Professional Secretariat**

3.7.1. The Health Research and Knowledge Management sub-component provides Professional Secretariat services to the Provincial Health Research Committee.

3.7.2. The functions of the sub-component involve the following responsibilities:
3.7.2.1. Provision of Professional Secretarial services to the Provincial Health Research Committee.

3.7.2.1.1. Issue invitations to members to attend meetings in a period not less than two weeks before the meeting.

3.7.2.1.2. Ensure that members inform the office of the Provincial Health Research Committee’s Professional Secretariat in not less than five (5) days if they are not able to attend.

3.7.2.1.3. Record minutes of scheduled meetings and disseminate to all members of the Provincial Health Research Committee within three (3) days of the date of the meeting.

3.7.2.2. Formulate and maintain the Research Policy, Research Strategy and Research Protocols for the Provincial Department.

3.7.2.3. Analyse, review and recommend on research proposals submitted to the Provincial Department in line with the Research Policy, Research Strategy and Research Protocols of the Provincial Department.

3.7.2.4. Facilitate processes for the formal registration of health research initiatives within the Province including setting of conditions and ethical standards.

3.7.2.5. Ensure that progress and final research reports are presented to the Provincial Health Research Committee and other stakeholders.

3.7.2.6. Provide research oversight services including site visits to monitor progress of research activities.

3.7.2.7. Determine the health research needs of the Provincial Department and liaise with research institutions to facilitate the alignment of research agenda.

3.7.2.8. Coordinate research initiatives to determine the clinical outcomes of traditional and other practices.
3.7.2.9. Project manage “in-house” research initiatives and report on the outcome thereof.
3.7.2.10. Analyse health research reports with a view to identifying new developments that may impact on existing clinical procedures and advice the Departmental Managers accordingly.
3.7.2.11. Facilitate processes to identify best practice in the Provincial Department and to share relevant lessons throughout the Provincial Department.
3.7.2.12. Develop a knowledge and learning management framework in the Provincial Department of Health.

4. Research Ethics Committee

4.1. The Department does not have a Research Ethics Committee as this is a specialized discipline.
4.2. Ethical clearance should be obtained from an accredited Research Ethics Committee prior to submission of a request to conduct research in the Province.

5. Research stakeholders

5.1. The two main categories are the primary and secondary stakeholders:

5.1.1. The primary stakeholders comprise the following:

5.1.1.1. Internally: The Member of the Executive Council; the Accounting Officer of the Department; Senior Managers; Health Programme Managers; District Managers and Facility Managers.

5.1.1.2. Externally: Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Organisations; Public Entities; Academic institutions; Research Institutions and other Government Departments.

5.1.2. The secondary stakeholders include funding agencies, private funded organisations such as the Medical Research Council and the Human Sciences Research Council.

6. Interaction

6.1. Interaction will occur at different levels.
6.1.1. Interaction between members of the Provincial Health Research Committee will be through formal means of communication for scheduling of meetings, communicating decisions of the Research Committee and any other matters in the execution of the Committee’s duties.

6.1.2. Interaction with supportive structures:

6.1.2.1. The Health Research and Knowledge Management sub-component will:

6.1.2.1.1. Liaise with the Chairperson for purposes of convening meetings and undertaking any other activities of the Provincial Health Research Committee.

6.1.2.1.2. Present research proposal recommendations to the Provincial Health Research Committee for approval.

6.1.3. Interaction with other stakeholders:

6.1.3.1. Interaction with other stakeholders will be through organised meetings and through written letters and telecommunication channels.

7. Assessment of research projects

7.1. Research projects will be assessed twice a year to monitor compliance with the research protocol.

7.2. Researchers should provide progress reports as determined by an agreement with the Provincial Health Research Committee.

8. Guidelines for research proposals

8.1. Research proposals should comply with the following suggested guidelines for development of research proposals:

8.1.1. **Title and authors:** This section includes the title and name of the Researcher or Researchers, the qualifications, address and the name of the institution.
8.1.2. **Summary or abstract**: A brief summary or abstract should be provided outlining the aim, objectives of the study, the research methodology and data analysis.

8.1.3. **Introduction**: This section provides the summary of relevant literature around the problem and the problem statement.

8.1.4. **Motivation**: The motivation should indicate the importance of the research on public health and outline the benefits of conducting such a research.

8.1.5. **Aim or purpose**: The aim or purpose should be clear and feasible.

8.1.6. **Objectives**: Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound and describe exact issues to be investigated by the Researcher or Researchers.

8.1.7. **Methods**:

8.1.7.1. **Study design**: Study design should specify whether the study is descriptive, analytical or an intervention.

8.1.7.2. **Study population**: The study population should be clearly stated in terms of gender, age, geographical location and any related relevant information.

8.1.7.3. **Sampling**: The sampling frame should include techniques used in sampling participants as well as the sample size.

8.1.7.4. **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**: The criteria used should be clearly stated.

8.1.7.5. **Data collection**: Instruments used for data collection should be specified and included with the research proposal submitted to the Provincial Health Research Committee.

8.1.7.6. **Data analysis**: Data analysis techniques that will be used when the research project is completed.

8.1.7.7. **Pilot study**: The research proposal should outline the undertaking of a pilot study to evaluate the data collection instruments before the main study.

8.1.8. **Ethical considerations**: This section indicates what ethical issues were considered during the development of the research proposal including Informed Consent issues and should provide proof of ethical clearance from an accredited Ethics Committee.
8.1.9. Feedback and dissemination of research findings: This section clearly outlines a strategy for feedback and dissemination of information to relevant stakeholders. It includes reports, presentations and publications. It is important to note that reports, presentations and publications should formally acknowledge the Provincial Department.

8.1.10. Budget: The research budget should be clearly outlined. Application for funding for research projects will have to be arranged with funding institutions by the Researcher. The Department has no funding allocation for research projects.

8.1.11. Time Frame: Researchers have to provide a realistic time frame for research projects.

8.1.12. Expected outcomes of the research: In this section the researcher states what he or she expects to achieve from the research activity that will contribute towards public health knowledge.

8.1.13. References and appendices: Literature used during the development of a research proposal should be properly referenced. Relevant appendices should be inserted at the end of the research proposal and should include the data collection instruments or tools and any relevant documentation referred to in the research proposal.