



**University of Fort Hare**  
*Together in Excellence*

## **INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM<sup>1</sup>**

**(AGES 18 YEARS AND ABOVE)**

**Title of Study:** Towards More Effective Research Training and Support for Postgraduate Counselling Psychology Students at South African Universities

### **Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

Dear participant,

My name is Chanelle Coombs-Brown, and I am a Doctoral candidate at the University of Fort Hare. I am conducting a research study to:

1. Determine the factors that enhance and hinder the dissertation process of master's Counselling Psychology students, leading to outcomes of completion or delay.
2. Explore the research experiences and support available to Counselling Psychology master's students at South African universities.
3. To explore programme coordinators' perceptions of student delays in research and the support available to them at each university.
4. Develop guidelines to improve research training and support for postgraduate Counselling Psychology students at South African universities.

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by UREC (13 November 2019)

## **Study Procedure**

Participating in this study will contribute to a body of knowledge that seeks to improve master's students' educational experiences and outcomes at South African universities.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Complete an anonymous online survey that will take approximately 9 minutes (students only)
2. Participate in a follow-up online focus group interview, which will last approximately 1 hour (students and programme coordinators separately)

## **Confidentiality**

The information you provide will remain confidential. This means that your name and address will not be linked in any way to the answers you give. We study and report on the answers provided by all the people we interview/survey and not on an individual basis. The research data will be anonymous – with all personal respondent information removed and will be archived at the University of Fort Hare.

## **Survey Confidentiality**

The information you submit through the anonymous online survey will be coded to guarantee your anonymity.

## **Focus Group Confidentiality**

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of online focus group interviews, you will be requested to join the interview on Microsoft Teams as a guest, allowing you to enter either a first name or a pseudonym (false name) to ensure anonymity. If you wish to join the focus group interview via your personal or work account, you may be unable to change your display name. To avoid your details from appearing and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, you will not be required to turn on your video feature on Microsoft Teams. Please also ensure that you can join the focus group interview from a place that allows for as much privacy as possible or indicate a suitable time to join the interview, allowing you to speak openly on the topic. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants, unauthorized recording of the focus group session is strictly prohibited. By participating in this study, you agree not to record the

session in any form. Unauthorized recording may result in penalties and disqualification from the study.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation is voluntary, and you are not forced to participate in this study—the choice of whether to participate is yours. However, we would appreciate your sharing your thoughts with us. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this, there will also be no penalties, and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

### **Potential Risks and Benefits**

The risks associated with participation in this study are limited and no greater than those encountered in daily life. Data breaches related to online surveys and focus groups are always possible, even with our security procedures in place to safeguard your information. Specific measures taken to mitigate this risk include data encryption, secure storage platforms, and ensuring vetted third-party service providers adhere to stringent data protection standards.

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to a broader understanding of how to support Counselling Psychology master students in successfully completing their dissertations. Your insights and experiences can provide valuable data that will inform future practices in Counselling Psychology. Being part of this study allows you to engage in the research process, enhancing your own understanding of the field and contributing to the academic community. Your participation will help identify areas where support and interventions can be improved, ultimately benefiting future students.

### **Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns**

This research has been approved by the Inter-Faculties Research Ethics Committee (IFREC) as per delegated authority of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any

way by participating in this study, please call the IFREC Administrator, [Aphiwe Jadezweni, 040 602 2561 and [ajadezweni@ufh.ac.za](mailto:ajadezweni@ufh.ac.za)]

### **Reporting and Complaints**

If you have questions at any time about this study, or if you have concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher/project leader whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise that you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher/project leader, please get in touch with the IFREC Chairperson, Dr A Nyika on [040 602 2516 and [ANyika@ufh.ac.za](mailto:ANyika@ufh.ac.za)] or the UREC Chairperson, Dr N Taole-Mjimba on (043 704 7507 and [nTaole-Mjimba@ufh.ac.za](mailto:nTaole-Mjimba@ufh.ac.za))

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please feel free to contact the project coordinators: **Researcher/Project Leader:**

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