Research Toolkit & Consultation Services

Terms and Conditions

Last Updated: 15 March 2026 | Version 3.0

Applicable to: All registered users of the Research Toolkit Portal

These Terms and Conditions ("Terms") constitute a legally binding agreement between you ("the Student", "User") and the Research Toolkit Portal ("we", "us", "the Platform") governing your access to and use of all toolkit materials, consultation services, and platform features. By registering an account, making a payment, or accessing any part of the platform, you acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agree to be bound by these Terms in their entirety.

If you do not agree with any part of these Terms, you must not register, purchase, or use the platform.

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1. Definitions

Term	Definition
"Platform"	The Research Toolkit Portal website, application, and all associated services.
"Student" / "User"	Any individual who registers an account or purchases services on the Platform.
"Toolkit"	The structured digital learning resource comprising Part A (Concepts & Guidance), Part B (Guided Working Draft), and the Worked Example Companion.
"Consultation"	A scheduled one-on-one online session between a Student and a Verified Academic Researcher.
"Verified Academic Researcher"	A registered and verified academic researcher providing guidance through the Platform.
"Package"	A bundled service offering comprising toolkit access and, where applicable, consultation sessions.
"Session"	A single consultation booking of standard 60-minute duration.
"Business Day"	Monday to Friday, excluding South African public holidays.

2. Scope and Nature of Services

The Research Toolkit provides structured academic guidance resources for students engaged in postgraduate and undergraduate research across all disciplines. The Platform operates as an educational support service only.

2.1 Services Provided

- Access to the online toolkit (Part A: Concepts & Guidance; Part B: Guided Working Draft; Worked Example Companion)
- Scheduled one-on-one consultation sessions with registered Verified Academic Researchers
- Platform-based support ticket system for academic guidance queries (note: support ticket content is retained for 24 months in accordance with our Privacy Policy)
- Automated email notifications for bookings, confirmations, and account activity

2.2 Services Explicitly Excluded

The following are not offered and will not be provided under any circumstances:

- Writing, drafting, editing, or proofreading of any academic work
- Ghostwriting or co-authorship in any form
- Formulation of research topics from scratch on behalf of students
- Submission or representation of academic work to any institution
- Legal, financial, medical, or psychological advice
- Guarantees of any academic outcome, mark, approval, or result

3. Eligibility and Registration

3.1 Eligibility

To register and use the Platform, you must be enrolled in a recognised academic institution and be undertaking a research-based module or programme. By registering, you confirm that you meet these requirements.

3.2 Account Responsibility

- You are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of your login credentials
- You must not share your account with any other person
- You must notify us immediately of any unauthorised access to your account
- You are responsible for all activity conducted through your account
- Accounts are non-transferable and may not be sold or assigned to another person

3.3 Accurate Information

You must provide accurate, truthful, and up-to-date information during registration. Providing false information, including falsely claiming institutional enrolment, constitutes a material breach of these Terms and may result in immediate account termination without refund.

4. Research Topics and Pre-Consultation Requirements

The Platform's services are designed to support students who already have a defined research direction. The following conditions apply to all toolkit use and consultation bookings:

- Students must have an existing, defined research topic or area of interest before booking any consultation
- Consultations may assist with refining, narrowing, or clarifying an existing topic — not generating one
- Students are expected to have reviewed relevant toolkit sections before their consultation session
- Bringing a draft or outline to a consultation session, even a brief one, will significantly improve its value

Where a student arrives at a session without an existing topic, the consultant will redirect the session to guiding the student on how to independently identify a research gap. No topic will be assigned. The session will not be refunded on this basis.

5. Academic Integrity

The Research Toolkit Portal is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity. All use of the Platform must comply with the academic integrity policies of your institution.

5.1 Student Obligations

- All academic work submitted to your institution must be your own original work
- You may use toolkit frameworks, templates, and guidance as a reference — not as content to submit directly
- You must properly acknowledge all external sources, including guidance received through consultations
- You must disclose use of external guidance services where required by your institution

5.2 Prohibited Requests

The following requests constitute a breach of these Terms and will result in immediate service termination:

- Requesting that a consultant or platform staff write, edit, or paraphrase academic work
- Requesting ghostwriting services of any kind
- Using toolkit content verbatim in submitted academic work without proper attribution
- Attempting to obtain pre-written answers or fabricated data
- Misrepresenting the nature of the service to your institution

5.3 Consequences of Violations

- Immediate termination of all services and platform access without notice

- Forfeiture of all fees paid — no refund will be issued
- Permanent account ban from the platform
- Reporting to the relevant institution where there is a legal or ethical obligation to do so

6. Package Inclusions and Access

The following packages are available. Inclusions are as described at the time of purchase and are subject to change with notice.

Package	Price (ZAR)	Part A	Part B	Worked Example	Consultations
Basic	R350	**Yes**	**Yes**	No	None
Structured	R899	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**1 session**
Advanced	R1 299	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**2 sessions**

- Platform access is granted immediately upon confirmed payment
- Consultation sessions included in packages must be used within 6 months of the purchase date
- Top-up sessions purchased separately must be used within 3 months of purchase
- Package access does not expire unless the account is terminated for a breach of these Terms
- Package upgrades are available at any time — the price difference will be charged
- Downgrades are not permitted once access to a higher-tier package has been granted. Students who believe they have purchased the incorrect package should contact support within 24 hours of purchase — no downgrade refunds are available after access has been granted

7. Consultation Sessions

7.1 Format and Duration

- Sessions are conducted online via the platform's integrated video link system
- Standard session duration is 60 minutes
- Sessions begin and end at the scheduled time — late arrivals do not receive extensions
- Students are encouraged to share their screen or draft document during the session
- Sessions are facilitated by registered Verified Academic Researchers only

7.2 Session Conduct

- Students must engage respectfully with consultants at all times
- Abusive, threatening, or inappropriate conduct will result in immediate session termination
- Terminated sessions due to student misconduct will not be refunded or replaced
- Any recording of sessions requires the explicit consent of all parties
- Consultants may decline to proceed with a session if a student's request violates these Terms

7.3 Additional Sessions

Additional top-up sessions beyond package inclusions may be purchased at R200 per session. Top-up sessions must be used within 3 months of purchase and are subject to Verified Academic Researcher availability.

8. Booking, Rescheduling, and Cancellations

Scenario	Outcome
Cancellation with 24+ hours' notice	Session returned to your account for rescheduling
Cancellation with less than 24 hours' notice	Session forfeited — no replacement or refund
No-show (student does not join)	Session forfeited — no replacement or refund
Verified Academic Researcher cancels	Session returned to your account; rescheduled at no cost
Technical failure on Platform side	Session returned to account; full rescheduling offered
Technical failure on Student side	Session treated as student's responsibility; no replacement

Rescheduling is permitted up to twice per consultation session. A third rescheduling request will be treated as a cancellation and the session will be forfeited.

9. Payments, Pricing, and Invoicing

9.1 Payment Terms

- All payments must be made in full in advance before access is granted
- Prices are quoted in South African Rand (ZAR). All displayed prices are VAT-inclusive where the Platform is VAT-registered; otherwise prices are stated exclusive of VAT and VAT will not be added
- The Platform reserves the right to update pricing with 30 days' notice to registered users
- Price changes do not affect packages already purchased

9.2 Invoicing

Upon confirmed payment, an order confirmation will be issued to your registered email address. This confirmation includes your unique order reference number (format: RTK-XXXXXXXX) and serves as your invoice. Retain this for your records.

9.3 Failed Payments

If a payment fails or is reversed, access will be suspended immediately. The Platform will notify you via email. Access will be restored upon successful payment. The Platform is not responsible for delays or charges imposed by your bank or payment provider.

10. Refunds and Disputes

10.1 Package Purchases

Due to the immediate digital nature of platform access, package purchases (Basic, Structured, Advanced) are non-refundable once access has been granted. In accordance with Section 44 of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), students who purchase remotely and have not yet accessed the platform may cancel within 5 business days of purchase for a full refund. Once digital access is granted, this cooling-off right no longer applies. Exceptions beyond the cooling-off period may be considered only in the event of a verified platform failure that prevents access entirely.

10.2 Consultation Top-Up Sessions

Top-up consultation sessions (R200/session) are refundable only in the following circumstances:

- The session is cancelled by the student with more than 24 hours' notice
- The session is cancelled by the Platform or Verified Academic Researcher

- A verifiable technical failure on the Platform's side prevents the session from proceeding

10.3 Refund Process

- All refund requests must be submitted through the platform support system
- Requests must include your order reference number and a brief description
- Approved refunds will be processed within 5–7 business days
- Refunds will be returned to the original payment method
- No cash refunds are available

10.4 Disputes

If you dispute a charge, contact us at info@researchtoolkit.co.za before initiating a chargeback with your bank. Unauthorised chargebacks will result in immediate account suspension. We will always endeavour to resolve disputes fairly and within 10 business days.

11. Intellectual Property and Use of Materials

All content on the Platform, including toolkit frameworks, guidance documents, templates, worked examples, and consultation materials, is the intellectual property of the Research Toolkit Portal and is protected by South African copyright law.

- Materials are licensed for personal academic use only by the registered student
- Redistribution, resale, or sharing of platform content is strictly prohibited
- Reproduction of content for commercial purposes is prohibited
- Sharing login credentials or granting access to any third party is prohibited
- Screenshots or recordings of toolkit content may not be shared publicly

Any unauthorised use of platform content may result in legal action under the Copyright Act of South Africa.

12. Platform Availability and Technical Issues

While we strive to maintain continuous platform availability, we do not guarantee uninterrupted access. Scheduled maintenance will be communicated via email with at least 24 hours' notice where possible. Emergency maintenance may occur without notice.

- Platform downtime does not automatically entitle users to refunds or compensation
- Consultation sessions affected by verified platform outages will be rescheduled at no cost
- Users are responsible for ensuring they have a stable internet connection for sessions
- Technical issues on the user's side do not entitle them to session replacements

13. Liability Limitations

To the fullest extent permitted by South African law, the Research Toolkit Portal shall not be liable for:

- Any indirect, incidental, or consequential damages arising from use of the Platform
- Academic outcomes including failed proposals, poor marks, or graduation delays
- Loss of data caused by user error, device failure, or circumstances beyond our control
- Actions or advice of third-party service providers
- Interruptions to service caused by events outside our reasonable control (force majeure), including but not limited to natural disasters, acts of government or state authority, strikes or industrial action, internet infrastructure failures, or pandemics

Our total aggregate liability to you for any claim shall not exceed the amount you paid for the specific service to which the claim relates.

14. Termination of Access

The Platform reserves the right to suspend or terminate your account without notice in the following circumstances:

- Breach of any provision of these Terms
- Academic integrity violations
- Providing false or misleading information during registration
- Abusive, threatening, or offensive conduct toward platform staff or consultants
- Unauthorised sharing of account credentials or platform content
- Non-payment or reversal of payment

You may close your account at any time by contacting support. Account closure does not entitle you to a refund of any fees paid.

15. Amendments to These Terms

We reserve the right to update these Terms at any time. Registered users will be notified of material changes by email at least 14 days before they take effect. Continued use of the Platform after the effective date of any changes constitutes acceptance of the revised Terms. If you do not accept the revised Terms, you must discontinue use of the Platform.

16. Governing Law and Jurisdiction

These Terms are governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Republic of South Africa, including but not limited to the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (ECT Act), the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

The parties agree to attempt to resolve any dispute through good-faith negotiation before initiating formal legal proceedings. Where good-faith negotiation is unsuccessful, any disputes shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the South African courts.

17. Contact and Complaints

For all queries, complaints, or formal dispute submissions, contact us via:

Channel	Details	Response Time
General	info@researchtoolkit.co.za	1–2 business days
Support	support@researchtoolkit.co.za	1–2 business days
Billing	billing@researchtoolkit.co.za	2 business days
Consultations	consultations@researchtoolkit.co.za	2 business days
Support Ticket	Platform support system (logged-in users)	1–2 business days
Refund Requests	Platform support system (logged-in users)	5–7 business days