



Instructions for submission and processing of applications¹

The ethics commission (hereinafter: commission) of the Thaer-Institute (ADTI) of the Humboldt-Universität Berlin (HU) assesses the ethical appropriateness of research projects upon application. The responsibility of the scientist responsible for conducting the research project in accordance with the applicable rules of good scientific practice remains unaffected by the commission's review. The review is free of charge for the applicant.

General information

Eligibility

- The commission shall act only upon request.
- It reviews applications for projects that are led by a member of the ADTI. Even in the case of multiple funding bodies (joint projects), the affiliation of the project manager is decisive. If there is more than one manager of equal status, one of them must be a member of the ADTI. Persons who have received written confirmation from the Institute Council of the ADTI that they will become members of the ADTI in the future may also submit an application to the commission with reference to that confirmation.
- In the case of *student projects* and *qualification projects*, the supervisor checks and assesses the ethical appropriateness. If an ethics vote is mandatory for publication, the student must submit an application to the commission.

Application

- The manager of the respective research project/study submits the application in writing, using the application form. If questions in the application form are answered with "no", then an explanation of the situation and circumstances and how the listed problem will be dealt with are required. The application form and any attachment must be bundled in a PDF file and sent to the chairperson of the commission. The following email address should be used: ethikkommission-adt@hu-berlin.de. The application can be submitted in German or English. Amendments and withdrawal of the application are possible. The commission must be informed immediately of any changes to the research project after the application has been submitted.

¹ The document is based on the guidelines of the DFG (https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/faq/geistes_sozialwissenschaften/) as well as on the guidelines of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Evaluation procedure and processing times

- The commission meets at least once a semester.
- The review process is carried out in writing.
- Generally, the regular evaluation by the commission should not take longer than four weeks.

Instructions for completing the application form

- 1.2. List other applicants in *Annex V Other applicants* if the boxes in the application form are not sufficient.
- 2.3., 2.4. In principle, the commission only reviews research projects, i.e., studies that will be carried out in the future. Studies that have been completed or have already begun are not reviewed. The data collection **relevant to the ethics review** concerns personal data (including secondary data) that are the focus of the project.
- 3.2. **Vulnerable persons** are those in particular need of protection, e.g. persons with reduced capacity to consent², such as children, youth, persons with disabilities, persons with mental illness, persons in open or closed prison, but also victims of persecution, members of threatened ethnic, religious or cultural minorities.
- 3.4., 8.8. **Deception** keeps participants in the dark about the actual aims and/or individual aspects and steps of the research so that participants do not adapt their behavior to the aims of the research, e.g. in the sense of an assumed social desirability. The ambiguity resulting from deception can be achieved both by deliberately spreading false information and by withholding relevant information.
- 3.5. **Risks**: Experiences or situations that exceed a person's everyday demands and stress can pose a risk to their mental and physical health. These include, for example, unfamiliar stressful situations, the risk of re-traumatization, risks associated with research in crisis regions, in the context of political repression or discrimination, or in environments on the bounds of legality. Other risks may include social risks, risks of criminal or civil liability, financial losses, professional disadvantages or damage to reputation, as well as difficult security situations in the study area³.
- 3.8. **Conflict of interest** see under item 13.
- 4.2. The brief description of your research project is limited to 4 000 characters with spaces and is intended to provide the commission with a *concise* overview of your project **details are given in Annex I**).

Please make sure to use the following subheadings (*please use a separate paragraph for each subheading*). If any of the subheadings do not apply to your project, please list them anyway and explicitly state that they do not apply to your project.

² See also https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/faq/geistes_sozialwissenschaften/

³ See also https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/faq/geistes_sozialwissenschaften/

Topic

Please briefly outline the topic and goal of your project.

Sample

The participants and test persons should be specified precisely (age, gender, inclusion and exclusion criteria, target number of participants and test persons, etc.). In addition, reasons should be given here briefly as to whether or why, for example, vulnerable persons should be chosen as participants and test persons.

Methods

The methods must be described in such a way that the commission may gain a first impression of the ethical dimensions. This refers, for example, to what exactly is being investigated (parameters), how this is being investigated (methods/procedures/measuring techniques and instruments), how long the study lasts (one-time study, recurring study, length of the study, duration per appointment), etc.

Risks

Here, it must be briefly outlined which potential physical and/or psychological burdens and other risks may arise for the participants and test persons as a result of participation, and how these burdens and risks can be minimized or avoided. If, in your opinion, stress or risks are not an issue, this should be explicitly stated (e.g. "From the point of view of the project management, there are no additional risks beyond those present in everyday life that can be attributed to participation in the proposed study").

- 4.5 Funding: Please indicate how your project will be funded (out of your own budget, third-party funds) and name of funders. Funding sources that are directly related to the proposed research must be explicitly named. In addition, material support (e.g. provision of measuring instruments, consumables or other material resources relevant to the method/research) must also be mentioned.
- 4.6. Please name all persons and institutions that are involved in the research project in an academic and/or research capacity or as cooperation partners. This includes, for example, professors at other universities or market research agencies. If the fields on the application form are not sufficient, please list other applicants in ***Annex V Other external participants***.
6. Research Methods: If you are conducting surveys, please indicate whether you are using standard questionnaires (if so, which ones) or custom-developed questionnaires. Attach data collection instruments as ***Annex III***.
- 10.4. According to § 3 of the Federal Data Protection Act, ***personal data*** is individual information about personal or factual circumstances of a specific or identifiable natural person (data subject).

- 10.6. **Sensitive data** is information whose publication could have negative consequences for the participants (e.g. loss of reputation, discrimination, legal consequences).
- 10.7. **(Emotional) stress** and **psychological stress** are defined here as stress that goes beyond everyday stress levels, is caused by participation and triggers considerable discomfort. The triggers in this regard vary from one individual to another. (Emotional) strains and psychological stress of the participants result, for example, from questions on unpleasant or repressed topics, from experiments in the course of which the participants will take on roles or make decisions that they dislike, or from restrictions on personal freedom of action and choice (e.g. longer stays in the laboratory or interventions in the daily routine in one's own home).
13. **Conflicts of interest** are all situations that may motivate researchers, participants, project managers or other stakeholders (e.g. third-party funders) to take into account interests that are not related to research. Reasons for conflicts of interest include, in particular, the researcher's own financial, material or private interests or the financial, material or private interests of persons with whom the researcher has a close personal relationship.

Annex I – Implementation of the research

In order to be able to assess your application in a differentiated manner, detailed explanations on your part, which go beyond the information you have provided in the application form, are necessary.

Please prepare **Annex I** to conduct the research, taking into account the following points and guidance:

Methods

- Explain the methods of your research, in particular with regard to the relevant ethical aspects (e.g. methods involving the collection of sensitive data).
- Explain and justify each case in which you have indicated 'no' in the application. E.g. explain and justify the involvement of vulnerable persons; explain and justify the methodological approach to the need for deception in the research.
- Explain special incentives in research and their necessity.
- Explain how you will deal with sensitive issues and/or content that could be hurtful, offensive, frightening, etc. to the participants or subjects, or that could lead the participants or subjects to making statements that could have legal consequences for themselves or others.

Sampling

- Explain and describe the composition of your sample. Clarify how the participants or test persons are identified and recruited and which criteria are important for the selection.
- Explain to what extent the voluntary nature of participation in the study is guaranteed and to what extent the persons contacted can also decide not to participate. In addition, attach a copy of your information for the participants as **Annex II – Information for participants and respondents**.
- Explain to what extent informed consent is obtained from participants and in what form (verbal, written, electronic, etc.). Please also describe what information about the research and the associated objectives the participants or subjects will receive. Informed consent is strongly related to the question of voluntariness of participation. Informed consent means that participation in scientific research is based, firstly, on the most detailed and comprehensible information possible about the aims and methods of the research project, and, secondly, on the explicit consent of the participants. Please also attach a copy of your informed consent form as **Annex IV - Informed Consent Form**. If you do not obtain informed consent, please also give reasons for this.

Risks for participants and subjects as well as for researchers

- In each case, explain and justify if you have indicated 'no' in the application, e.g.:
 - Explain the risks to the physical and mental health of the participants or subjects that go beyond the everyday level. Also explain the strategies you use to minimize any risks.
 - The risks to the physical and mental health of the researchers that go beyond the everyday level. Also explain the strategies you use to minimize any risks.

Data handling and publication

- Explain how data are handled in your research. Also refer to anonymization and pseudonymization strategies, data storage, data access options and data deletion.
- Comment on the accessibility of the research results for the research community as well as for the participants and the broader public.

Explanations, if 'no' was indicated

- Please justify the statement with reference to the respective point.

Annex II - Information for participants and respondents

The information for participants and volunteers must be written in a language that can be understood by the participants and volunteers concerned. It must contain the following information:

- Who investigates? (Responsibilities)
- Where will the study take place? (Place)
- What is being examined? (parameters)
- Why is the study being conducted? (Brief justification/interest in knowledge)
- How is it being investigated? (Methods)
- Potential risks
- Voluntary participation
- Possibility to cancel participation at any time without consequences
- Ensuring data protection/data deletion if participation is cancelled
- Time required for participation (once / several times / per date)
- Who is funding the investigation?

Annex III - Data collection instruments

Please attach relevant interview guidelines, questionnaires or similar. Please explain if this is not yet available and, in that case, explain which data will be collected.

Annex IV – Informed consent form

Please also enclose the informed consent form here. Depending on the project, the informed consent must be designed in a correspondingly comprehensive manner (see information for participants and volunteers).

Further annexes

If necessary, please attach further documents to your application. These may include documents already mentioned in these guidelines: **Annex V** Other applicants and external stakeholders.