



# **Guidelines for researchers applying for approval of research projects at The Faculty of Social Sciences' Research Ethics Committee**

The following is a guide as to the considerations for research projects seeking approval from the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee that functions as an Institutional Review Board (IRB). In the application, applicants are encouraged to describe the plans for the research project in greater detail as well as account for how the project meets the stated requirements. The requirements are guidelines in the sense that the Committee will decide whether a project is approvable. It should be noted that the following are guidelines rather than prescriptions and prohibitions and they intend to serve an advisory, guiding and preventive function. The guidelines state what researchers should take into consideration and do for their research to be responsible. The Committee will in any case base its judgments on an overall assessment of a research project and may as a result include other considerations than the ones explicitly mentioned here.

## **Reasonable purpose**

An investigation should have an ethically reasonable purpose and it should have the potential to produce new and relevant knowledge in an appropriate way.

## **Risks and possible dilemmas**

The project and its results may not inflict damage on its participants, nor expose them to significant risks of damage. This applies to the way in which respondents are recruited, the investigation itself and the final product. It also applies to potential emotional strain caused by the recruitment, the project, the investigation itself or the ensuing publication of the results. This includes the risks of inflicting unwarranted damage to a person or group's public reputation by publishing the project's results. Furthermore, the project should take measures to ensure the safety of the researchers in areas of research exposed to physical or mental danger. Please describe how you will handle possible dilemmas. In addition, please describe possible risks and disadvantages of participation and possible advantages of participation.

## **Information provided to informants**

Informants may in general only be involved in research (e.g. via interviews, focus groups, participant observation etc.) based on their informed consent. Informed consent is defined by a number of internationally recognized conventions and guidelines and the given consent may be written or verbal. However, the type of information required depends on the nature of the research; whether it takes the form of field studies, experiments, using registry data or the internet.

The Faculty of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee recommends applicants to seek more specific information about the duty to inform and exceptions from the main rule, depending on the nature of the research, see for example [Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology or Ethical Guidelines for Internet Research](#), The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, Oslo 2016. If an applicant finds that a research project does not require individual informed consent from its participants, he or she should state the reasons why in his or her application.

## **Safe storage of data**

Data collected in the project must be stored safely, i.e. it should be inaccessible to unauthorized persons and stored in a way that minimizes the risk of loss of data. Data storage must be conducted in a way that makes it accessible to other researchers for similar research purposes and available for examination, in case questions of the project's results or integrity arise. Data must be stored for at least 5 years (cf. [the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)) after the end of the project period. Here, data means any form of collected material, not only sound or video recordings but also printed material, items or other significant objects, which are important to the purpose of the project. University of Copenhagen is currently working on establishing appropriate routines for safe storage. Applicants should consult their respective departments to learn more about the current situation.

## **Anonymised use of data**

Generally, anonymization of informants depends on the purpose of the investigation (procedures of informed consent must still be applied). Normally, however, the investigation's results are only published or used for other purposes in anonymised form. Here, anonymised means removal or modification of names or descriptions that may make it possible to identify the individual in question.

## **Registration of research projects using personal data**

According to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Danish Data Protection Act (Databeskyttelsesloven), the University is obligated to keep a joint record of the processing of personal data. Therefore, researchers must register research projects containing personal data using the form available on [the Researcher Portal](#). The duty to register research comprises all projects that include processing of personal data, including projects containing non-sensitive data. Furthermore, the Faculty Secretariat shall approve research projects containing sensitive personal data.