

Ethics checklist

Student research with human participants

Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences

1. Participants

- a. What is the (estimated) number of participants? What is the power analysis to determine sample size, if relevant?
- b. Does the study involve participants who cannot give informed written consent?
 - If yes: Discuss which alternative measures the student will take to obtain consent.
- c. Does the research involve potentially vulnerable groups (e.g., children, people with cognitive impairment)?
 - If yes: Discuss why and what measures the student has to take to avoid or minimise harm.
- d. Will the study require a gatekeeper's cooperation for initial access to the groups or individuals recruited? (e.g., students at school, moderators of online discussion platforms, residents of a nursing home)?
 - If yes: Which agreements has the student made with this gatekeeper, for example with respect to data collection, data management, data use, consent?
- e. How will informed consent be obtained in the study (please note that obtaining informed consent from participants is a fundamental ethical principle)? In case this is unobtainable prior to the study (e.g., when people are observed in public places or online spaces, when the research employs deception):
 - Be sure to clarify why the student cannot use an alternative method and conduct a cost-benefit analysis to establish whether the benefits of data collection outweigh the interests and fundamental rights and freedoms of participants.
 - Discuss whether and how consent will be asked afterwards, and what measures are put in place to minimize potential risks.
- f. Will any dependent relationships exist between the researchers and those who are involved in data collection on the one hand, and potential participants on the other hand?
 - If yes: Discuss why and how, and the measures to minimize potential risks.

2. Research design and data collection

- a. Will the study address sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity or preference, drug use, [mental] health problems, politics)?
 - If yes: Discuss which topics will be investigated, and what risk is involved. What measures are taken to minimise any risk, if applicable?
- b. Will the study involve invasive, intrusive, or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?
 - If yes: Discuss the procedure and perform a brief cost-benefit analysis. What measures are taken to minimise any risk, if applicable?
- c. Could the study induce psychological stress, discomfort, anxiety, cause harm, or have negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in everyday life?
 - If yes: Be sure to clarify the procedure and explain why the student cannot use an alternative method. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis if necessary. What measures are taken to minimise any risk, if applicable?
- d. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?

- If yes: Discuss the procedure and clarify how the student safeguards the interests and well-being of the participants.
- e. Is there any form of deception (misinformation about the goal of the study) involved?
 - If yes: Discuss the procedure and clarify the rationale for its use.
- f. How will the student guarantee anonymity and confidentiality? Make sure a clear procedure is designed and estimate the risk of a breach of confidentiality.
- g. Will the student be using methods that allow visual and/or vocal identification of respondents?
 - If yes: Are there alternatives?
 - If no: What will the student do to secure the participant's privacy?
- h. Will the research involve respondents on the internet?
 - Are participants participating anonymously?
 - If not: why?
 - If yes: how does the student plan to anonymise the participants?
- i. Which direct personal data (e.g., names, address information) and indirect personal (e.g., demographic data) will be collected?
 - Discuss for each type of data as precisely as possible why they are necessary to answer the research question(s). Please note that data minimization is the norm, which implies that as little personal data as possible should be collected.
- j. Will the student be collecting information through a third party?
 - If yes: Who is that party? Make sure to clarify the procedure and the agreements made about (personal) data.
- k. What information in the informed consent will participants be given about the research?
 - Please follow the guidelines in 'Handout Student Research and Data'.
- l. If the research procedures change, how will consent be renegotiated?

3. Data management

- Where will the data be stored during the project?
- Which measures has the student taken to make sure the data is stored securely?
- Which safety precautions have you arranged in case of leakage of personal data?
- Is there the intention to share the data being collected?
 - If no: why not?
 - If yes: how will the data be shared?

Additional questions?

This checklist is inspired by *Research Ethics for Students in the Social Sciences* (Jaap Bos, 2020), a book that provides a non-technical introduction to research ethics and integrity-related issues. Luckily, it is [available in open access](#). Additionally, you can find information on handling personal data through [this handout](#). Are your students having trouble with data management in their project? We made a useful [Libguide](#).

Are you having doubts on issues regarding research ethics, data management, or privacy? Do you want to apply for formal ethical clearance for a student project? However, you are always welcome to contact the Research Ethics and Data Management Committee secretary by phone +31134662177 or by [mail](#).