

Evaluation of research projects by the Paderborn University Ethics Committee

Guidelines for applicants

On request, the Paderborn University Ethics Committee reviews and evaluates research projects carried out by Paderborn University researchers and students according to ethical criteria and issues statements on individual research projects. Submitted applications are reviewed vis-à-vis the protection of human dignity and the autonomy and self-determination of people involved in research projects. Where required, security-related aspects can also be reviewed.

An application is submitted where the research project in question is a research project for which research bodies (e.g. the German Research Foundation (DFG), European Commission (EC), VW Foundation) or publishers typically require provision of an ethics statement. Applications can, however, also be submitted for internal university research projects and theses. The Ethics Committee sends its statements to the person submitting the application. If the Ethics Committee objects to any planned research steps, the applicant must agree to implement appropriate modifications to the research plan together with the relevant research body or supervisor.

The Ethics Committee is a body appointed by the Senate.

Applications should be submitted to the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Professor Buyken:

Professor Dr. Anette Buyken, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Room J5.242, Tel. +49 5251 60-3756
Committee's office: Cordula Stratmann, Room B3.239, Tel. +49 5251 60-2801
E-mail: ethik-kommission@zv.uni-paderborn.de

Detailed information on the role of the Ethics Committee and the application procedure can be found in the "Paderborn University Ethics Committee Regulations" dated 25 January 2017, available on the Paderborn University website at:

<http://www.uni-paderborn.de/universitaet/ethik-kommission/>

Key information for applicants and helpful tips for submitting applications are provided below.

Eligibility/obligation to submit an application

Paderborn University researchers, PhD students and students are eligible to submit applications for theses or degree-related research projects supervised by a member of Paderborn University. Students and PhD students submit applications together with their supervisor.

There is no obligation to submit an application to the Ethics Committee for research projects. However, it goes without saying that all researchers are obliged to observe data protection regulations, laws and ethical standards at all times. Applications typically need to be submitted in cases where the research project in question needs to meet the requirements of external funding providers or publishers that make an ethical evaluation a prerequisite for financial support or for the publication of research findings. In such cases, and in other cases, too, the Ethics Committee supports the associated researchers by providing advice and assessing the ethical aspects of their research. This does not release researchers from their responsibility for their actions.

Evaluation criteria

As standard, the Ethics Committee evaluates submissions in line with the German Psychological Society's professional ethical guidelines (DGPs, version 21/09/2016). These are clearly formulated, comprehensive guidelines that are also widely accepted by external funding providers and journals outside the field of psychology. The German Association for Experimental Economic Research's (GfeW) standard procedure for reviewing the ethical aspects of research projects (GfeW review procedure) is also drawn on for the assessment (<https://gfew.de/ethik>). On request, however, other guidelines, as preferred by the applicant, can also serve as a basis for the evaluation. Applicants confirm that they are aware of the guidelines to be applied and that they have taken these guidelines into account in their planning activities.

The DGPs guidelines can be viewed at the following link (Chapter 7):

https://www.dgps.de/fileadmin/documents/Empfehlungen/berufsethische_richtlinien_dgps.pdf.

Application procedure

There are two types of application procedure: standard procedure and in-depth procedure. In contrast to the in-depth procedure, the standard procedure allows for a simple, accelerated review and evaluation of research projects. All applicants must complete a standard questionnaire, which then determines whether an in-depth application is required.

In the first step (standard procedure), applicants complete a checklist-based standard questionnaire, which can be found on the Ethics Committee's website:

<http://www.uni-paderborn.de/universitaet/ethik-kommission>

If a project proposal or a similar document exists at the stage to which the application for ethical review relates, the text or draft of the full proposal should be provided. If applicants can answer all questions on the standard questionnaire as ethically inoffensive (white boxes in the document), they will only need to submit the standard questionnaire, together with a brief description of the research project (max. 1-2 pages (see below for content) as well as participant information including informed consent and the data privacy statement including informed consent), i.e. a standard application. The applicant will then receive a decision confirming the ethical soundness of their project within a short period of time, usually within *two weeks*.

The in-depth procedure will need to be followed if the standard questionnaire contains at least one answer of concern (i.e. a tick in a coloured box). Applicants should submit a one to three-page explanation for each aspect of concern in question, specifying why they need to deviate from the DGPs's ethical guidelines.

In the in-depth procedure, applications are evaluated by the Ethics Committee members, and applicants generally receive a statement back from the committee within *four to six weeks* after submission of their application. The Chair communicates the recommendation to applicants. The Ethics Committee reserves the right to seek external advice and expert opinions. In such cases, it may take more than six weeks for the Ethics Committee to make its recommendation.

Applications to the Ethics Committee should be self-explanatory, i.e. the Ethics Committee must be able to come to a recommendation solely on the basis of the written documents submitted. Applications that are not self-explanatory will be returned to applicants without any recommendation. A recommendation from the Ethics Committee can also be requested for projects that have already been started. Applicants should take into account the time required by the Ethics Committee to process their application. Descriptions of research projects, including as part of the standard procedure, should include the following information:

1. Objective and research question
2. How the research project is (to be) funded
3. How the research project is (to be) structured and carried out (e.g. design, measuring methods)
4. Groups of people involved (e.g. researchers and participants (sample))

5. How participants are (to be) recruited and informed (e.g. use of incentives, information letters, in the context of courses)
6. Which rights participants are (to be) granted and how these rights are (to be) safeguarded (e.g. anonymity / pseudonymisation, data privacy, alternative offers if experiment takes place in the context of teaching situations)
7. Where applicable, statement on the dual-use problem of the research project

Applications will be evaluated with one of the following four possible outcomes:

- Certification of ethical integrity
- Certification of ethical integrity, subject to certain conditions communicated in the statement
- Request for resubmission following amendment of specific aspects judged to be of ethical concern or provision of any missing information hampering conclusive evaluation of the application
- Classification as ethically questionable

The Ethics Committee's statements always relate to the study as described in the application submitted for ethical evaluation. If major deviations from the information provided in the application occur during the course of the project the Ethics Committee must be consulted again.

Application requirements

Applications must be submitted in electronic form. Please send the required documents by e-mail to ethik-kommission@zv.upb.de, with all application documents

- Standard application: brief description of the research project + completed standard questionnaire; where applicable, existing project proposal or corresponding project outline
- In-depth application brief description + completed standard questionnaire, detailed description of the aspects of concern; where applicable, existing project proposal or corresponding project outline + any additional attachments

attached as one PDF document.

Please, **always** enclose the participant information including informed consent used in the context of your project/study as well as the data privacy statement including informed consent (**as two separate documents**) with your application.