

Ethics checklist student research with human participants¹

Leiden University – ethics committee of the faculty of Humanities and Archeology

This checklist aims to help supervisors discuss ethical norms and procedures with their students. The ethics committee expects both supervisors and students to do everything they can to conduct research responsibly, and encourages ethical reflection, good data management, and compliance with the [GDPR](#) to be part of the guidance process. Teachers and supervisors can use this checklist to conduct an ethical self-evaluation during an interview.

1. Participants

Please note that if any of the following questions lead to a “→ Yes” answer we strongly advise you to contact your [Privacy Officer](#) or the [Ethics Committee Secretary](#).

- a. What is the (estimated) number of participants? How will the sample size be determined²?
- b. Does the study involve participants who are unable to 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 or individuals? Consider both groups that are politically vulnerable (e.g., marginalized communities) and groups that are physically vulnerable (e.g., children³, the infirm or those suffering from cognitive impairments)?
→ If yes: Discuss why and what measures the student will take to avoid or minimize risk.
- d. Will the study require an external party’s cooperation for initial access to the participants recruited? (e.g., schools, moderators of online discussion platforms, nursing homes)?
→ If yes: Which agreements has the student made with this external party, 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 legal requirement)? In case this is unobtainable prior to the study (e.g., when the research is covert): Be sure to clarify why the student cannot use an alternative method and 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.

¹ For this checklist the term participants refers to informants, interviewees and experts. Nevertheless, for people who contribute to the research in other capacities than “participants” the questions of this document are still relevant.

² If relevant: what is the power analysis?

³ In case your research includes participants who are younger than 18, please be aware that you need to ask a parent or guardian for consent.

f. Ascertain if a dependency or relationship of authority exists between the researcher and the research participants or data collector.

→ If yes: Consult with [the Faculty's privacy officer](#) to discuss measures to minimize potential risks.

2. Research design and data collection

Please note that if any of the following questions lead to a “→ Yes” answer we strongly advise you to contact your [Privacy Officer](#) or the [Ethics Committee Secretary](#).

a. Will the study address sensitive topics (e.g., political views or affiliation, religion, sexual activity or preference, [mental] health data)⁴?

→ If yes: Discuss which topics will be investigated. Are there any risks involved and what measures are taken to minimise these?

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?

c. Could the study cause psychological stress, discomfort, anxiety, harm, or have negative consequences?

→ If yes: Be sure to clarify the procedure and explain why the student cannot use an alternative method. What measures are taken to minimise any risk?

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. How will the student guarantee (pseudo)anonymity and confidentiality if applicable?

Make sure a clear procedure is designed and estimate the risk of a breach of confidentiality.⁵

f. Will the student be using making audio or video recordings?

→ If yes: Are there alternatives? What will the student do to secure the participant's privacy?

g. If the research involves respondents on the internet (e.g., social media or participant recruitment platforms), will they be participating anonymously?

→ If not: Why?⁶

→ If yes: How does the student plan to anonymize the participants?

h. Will you conduct interviews?

→ If yes: Will you offer a possibility to the interviewees to authorize the material?

⁴ Visit the [website of de autoriteit persoonsgegevens](#) to get a complete overview of sensitive personal data.

⁵ It can occur that a participant does not want to be anonymized (for example: the participant has unique knowledge in a heritage project). In these cases, asking the participant whether and how they prefer to be referred to would be the best solution.

⁶ See the previous reference.

i. What personal data (e.g. names, address information, email addresses) 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 standard; please collect as little personal data as possible for the purpose of your research.

j. Will the student be collecting information through the use of a third party's software or other external processor?

→ If yes: Please list the software or external processor and the procedure and the agreements made about (personal) data with this party.

k. What information will participants receive about the research in the informed consent form⁷?

l. If the research procedures change, how will consent be renegotiated with participants?

3. Data management (see also the HUM [webpage](#))

Please note that if any of the following questions lead to a “→ Yes” answer we strongly advise you to contact your [Privacy Officer](#) or the [Ethics Committee Secretary](#).

- Where will the research data/ personal data be stored during the project?
- How long will the data be stored? It is highly recommended to delete all personal data after research has been completed.
- 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?

Do you have questions or require further support regarding research ethics, data management, or privacy? Please contact the Ethics Committee secretary by email: ethics@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

⁷ It is important to describe the types of personal data you will be processing, the purpose of that processing and how long you will store the data.