

Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting an Application to the Ethics Review Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (ERCSSH), Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo

1. Information on preparing and submitting an application to ERCSSH

1.1. The ERCSSH will accept for review any research proposal within the scope of Social Sciences and Humanities, whether the research is funded or not and whatever the source of funding. However, the review process of ERCSSH will not cover the research that uses already published information.

1.2. The ERCSSH will discuss research submissions and decide whether, on ethical grounds, the research can proceed as proposed or if it requires any amendments.

1.3. The ethical perspectives in each of the following steps should be taken in to consideration while preparing research proposals for ethics review.

- Formulating the Research Problem
- the settings where the research takes place
- research design, and methods of data collection
- research participants
- type of data to be collected
- communication of research results
- Pressures on research participants by external agencies, and the (miss) representation of others' experiences by the researcher (adopted from Frankfort Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996: 77 in Henn et.al., 2006).

1.4. The applicant should submit Ethics Approval Form along with the research proposal for review. The ERCSSH meets monthly and the applicant should submit his/her research proposal 14 days prior to the next meeting date of the committee.

2. Concerns while working with people

The researcher has to be concerned about the possible consequences of his/her research to the people with whom s/he will work and must take precautions to prevent harmful effects. Harm can be recognized under several categories such as:

- Physical harm
- Psychological harm
- Harm through publication
- Harm to the researcher
- Harm to the research profession

The ERCSSH wishes to know from the researcher that the safety and wellbeing of research participants is assured, that the researcher is aware of any possible ethical issues in carrying out the research and that steps have been taken to ensure that the best practice is followed. The researcher should ensure that the confidentiality of the research participants is maintained and that where necessary, the anonymity of the information provided is preserved. It is important to pay special attention to these concerns/issues when the researcher works with or is researching children, potentially vulnerable adults and marginalized groups, persons engaged in potentially illegal activities, and people who are considered criminals, mentally ill etc.

3. Obtaining the Consent from Research Participants

3.1. It is expected that the research participants should enter into the research process freely and willingly with an understanding of the outcome of their participation in the research. The researcher should inform the research participants that he/she has the right to withdraw from any step of the research process at any time. It is expected that proposed research participants would be asked to give their agreement in writing on a Consent Form.

3.2. The researcher should ensure that, before written consent is given, the proposed participant has been given the opportunity of reading the information sheet in a language s/he is conversant with or that the information is read out to her in a language s/he understands to enable him/her to ask questions about the research. For this reason, sufficient time must be provided between the request to take part in the research and the signing of the document.

3.3. The researcher should clearly explain the following information to his/her research participants in a language that s/he understands, and the anonymity and confidentiality should be maintained throughout the research process.

1. The purpose of the study
2. How the data is used
3. In what form findings are published
4. The identity of the researcher and her/his institutional affiliations
5. Identity of the funder/s
6. What is expected from the interviewee/experiment participant
7. Whether participation voluntary or compulsive
8. Consequences of noncompliance if participation is compulsive and consent to withdraw if it is voluntary
9. How the data is stored, and
10. Whether the researcher intends to share the data with other researchers(Implications of publishing of research and data)

4. Confidentiality of information obtained during research

The researcher should be aware of the current legal requirements for storage of and access to data obtained from participants. The researcher has to take precautions necessary for protecting the identity of the research subjects who take part in the research and also the identity of the institution or community to which they are attached. The following actions can be taken as precautions:

- Using pseudonyms
- Changing the name of the geographical location
- Maintaining a contract agreement with the participants to assure confidentiality, and
- Allowing the participant to determine the location of where meetings should take place.

5. Making Payment to Research Participants

If the researcher wishes to make any payment or material incentives to the research participants, he/she should clarify/justify the reasons for making such payment in the research proposal/application enabling the ERCSSH to take into consideration in the review process.