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**AKU-ISMC Ethics Committee**

**Ethics Guidelines**

The structure and Terms of Reference of the AKU-ISMC’s Ethics Committee have been informed by the following guidelines:

1. Guidelines for researchers:

Professional Bodies Ethics Guidelines: Given the majority of research projects reviewed by the Committee from students and Faculty are based on social science and humanities methodologies, the Ethics Committee refers researchers to the [Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth’s *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice*](http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.htm) and the[*Statement of Ethical Practice* ofthe British Sociological Association](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm). The Committee expects researchers to be familiar with at least one of these guidelines, and to conduct their research accordingly. Students and researchers are also referred to the Research Ethics Guidebook[[1]](#footnote-1) (an online resource for social scientists run by Institute of Education, the ESRC and the Researcher Development Initiative), which sets out the UK legal requirements relating to conducting social research with human subjects.

1. Guidelines for Institutions:

UK Research Councils (in particular, the [ESRC Ethics Framework](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf)): The ESRC Research Ethics Framework provides the most comprehensive guidelines for research ethics committees in the UK. It complements codes developed by other Research Councils and is the principal reference point for UK social science[[2]](#footnote-2).

1. University guidelines:

In order to ensure consistency across University policy, the [AKU Ethics Review Committee Guidelines](http://www.aku.edu/res-office/res-erc-guidelines.shtml) will also inform Committee decisions.

**Process and Functions**

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|  | **Process** | **Functions/responsibilities of members** |
| 1 | **Applications**  Applicants submit 2 copies of the Ethical Approval Checklist to the secretary of the Ethics Committee, with supporting documentation | Secretary collates and advises Chair of receipt of application(s). |
| 2 | **Confirm receipt of application**  Applicants receive email acknowledging receipt of the applications | Secretary / Chair to confirm receipt |
| 3 | **Stage 1 Review**  Whether an application presents potential ethical issues will be assessed by the applicant’s responses to Section II of the Research Ethics Checklist. Applications that answer ‘yes’ to questions 1, 2b, 4, 5 and 6 will be submitted for stage 2 review. Applications that do not present any ethical risks can be approved by the internal members of the Committee  Applications that the Committee feels do not pose any ethical risks can be fast-tracked by the Chair of the Committee. | Chair to email applications to internal members, with a request for expedited review. Committee members to review application and provide feedback to Chair.  Should members agree to fast-track the application, the Chair will approve the application out of session.  Should members feel the application requires further discussion, the application will be reviewed by the Committee (see Stage 2 Review). |
| 4 | **Stage 2 Review**  Applications presenting potential ethical issues will be reviewed by the full committee (including external member). If need be, applicants will be asked to meet with the Committee in person and respond to any issues raised. Should the area of research fall outside of the expertise of committee members, external experts will be consulted. | Chair calls a meeting of Committee members; Secretary circulates applications for members to review.  Members discuss applications and their ethical implications. Members make recommendations to:   1. Approve the application 2. Approve the application with conditions 3. Request further information 4. Decline the application 5. Refer the application to the AKU Ethics Review Committee (in the case of high risk projects) |
| 5 | **Decision**  Decision of the Committee is communicated to applicants (within 4 weeksof the application submission)  For applications for which further information is needed, a letter requesting additional detail will be sent to the applicant. Upon resubmission of the application, the Committee may decide to review the application out of session (via email), in the next Committee meeting, or may chose to invite the applicant to attend the meeting to clarify any matters of concern. | **Approved applications:** copy of the application is returned to the applicant, with a letter communicating the decision of the Committee (both signed by the Chair)  **Approved with conditions:** a copy of the application is returned to the applicant, with the relevant conditions outlined. The applicant must respond *in writing* to accept the conditions. Should the applicant wish to contest the conditions, they should also do so in writing to the Chair.  **Declined applications:** The reasons for this will be communicated to the applicant in the correspondence from the Chair.  **Referred applications:** Applications will only be referred to the AKU Ethics Review Committee in the case that: 1) the research presents serious ethical and/or material risks to the researcher and/or participants; 2) presents serious legal risks to the university. The Chair of the Ethics Committee will submit the application to the AKU Ethics Review Committee. A decision to do so will be communicated to the applicant as soon as possible, who will be advised that the timeframe for ethical approval will need to be extended. |
| 6 | **Progress Reports**  For research project longer than 6 months, approved applicants will be asked to submit a progress report at 6-monthly intervals. | Committee members to review progress reports to ensure that the conduct of the study maintains ethical standards (as approved in the original ethics application).  The Committee may withdraw approval if the study is being conducted in a way which is not in accord with the conditions of its approval or in a way which does not protect the rights, dignity and welfare of the research participants. |
| 7 | **Final Reports**  Outputs from approved applications to be submitted to the Chair of Ethics Committee, and circulated to Committee members in the meeting papers of the subsequent Committee meeting. | Committee members to review final research reports/publications to ensure that ethical standards have been maintained. |

**STUDENT APPLICATIONS**

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|  | **Process** | **Functions/responsibilities of members** |
| 1 | **Applications**  Applicants submit 2 copies of the Ethical Approval Checklist to the secretary of the Ethics Committee, with supporting documentation | Secretary collates and advises Chair of receipt of application(s). |
| 2 | **Review**  Applications are circulated to committee members with meeting papers, agenda and minutes of previous meeting | Applications are reviewed by committee members for any ethical issues, on the basis the relevant ethics guidelines. [[Association of Social Anthropologists](http://www.theasa.org/ethics.htm); [British Sociological Association](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm)  [AKU URC Ethics Review Committee](http://www.aku.edu/res-office/res-erc.shtml)] |
| 4 | **Meeting**  Ethics Committee meeting held (on a need-basis) | Discussion of applications and their ethical implications. Members make recommendations to:   1. Approve the application 2. Approve the application with conditions 3. Request further information 4. Decline the application 5. Refer the application to the AKU Ethics Review Committee (in the case of high risk projects) |
| 5 | **Decision**  Decision of the Committee is communicated to applicants (within 4 weeksof the application submission) | **Approved applications:** copy of the application is returned to the applicant, with a letter communicating the decision of the Committee (both signed by the Chair)  **Incomplete applications:** For applications for which further information is needed, a letter requesting additional detail will be sent to the applicant. Upon resubmission of the application, the Committee may decide to review the application out of session (via email), in the next Committee meeting, or may chose to invite the applicant to attend the meeting to clarify any matters of concern.  **Declined applications:** The reasons for this will be communicated to the applicant in the correspondence from the Chair.  **Referred applications:** The secretary/or Chair of the Ethics Committee will submit the application to the AKU Ethics Review Committee. A decision to do so will be communicated to the applicant as soon as possible, who will be advised that the timeframe for ethical approval will need to be extended. |
| 6 | **Progress Reports**  For research project longer than 6 months, approved applicants will be asked to submit a progress report at 6-monthly intervals. | Committee members to review progress reports to ensure that the conduct of the study maintains ethical standards (as approved in the original ethics application).  The Committee may withdraw approval if the study is being conducted in a way which is not in accord with the conditions of its approval or in a way which does not protect the rights, dignity and welfare of the research participants. |
| 7 | **Final Reports**  Outputs from approved applications to be submitted to the Chair of Ethics Committee, and circulated to Committee members in the meeting papers of the subsequent Committee meeting. | Committee members to review final research reports/publications to ensure that ethical standards have been maintained. |

**CHECKLIST**

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| **1** | The procedures for recruiting participants are appropriate |  |
| **2** | The procedures for obtaining informed consent are appropriate |  |
| **3** | Any ethical risks relating to the site/location of the research have been considered |  |
| **4** | Methods to ensure confidentiality have been explained |  |
| **4** | Purpose and research design are clearly explained |  |
| **5** | Cultural appropriacy and sensitivity have been considered |  |
| **6** | All foreseeable risks or discomfortsto the subjects have been considered (including possible psychological, social, or economic harm, discomfort, or inconvenience) |  |
| **7** | How the results of the study will be shared with subjects has been explained |  |
| **8** | Consent document is clearly written so as to be understandable to subjects (local language wherever applicable). |  |
| **9** | The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate |  |

1. http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ESRC Research Ethics Framework, p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)