

Pursuant to Article 48 of the Statute of the School of Advanced Social Studies (UPB4) (hereinafter: FUDŠ) of 20 April 2015, the Senate of FUDŠ at its 2nd session on 26 November 2015 adopted the

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AT THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED SOCIAL STUDIES IN NOVA GORICA

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

The Research Ethics Committee at the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica (REC) is an advisory body that promotes or enables ethically responsible research by higher school teachers, researchers and studies on all levels of studies and within all study programmes conducted at the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica (hereinafter: FUDŠ).

The main objective of REC is to balance different moral views in the process of evaluation a research proposal, including the consideration of autonomy, protection and the achievement of welfare of the research community, researchers and participants.

REC makes sure that the researchers at FUDS consider established methodological standards and valid regulations as well as internationally recognised moral rules and standards that apply for an individual research area.

These Rules determine:

- the types of research projects, for which REC can provide its opinion,
- the organisation of REC,
- types of ethical assessment,
- elements that need to be integrated in the ethical assessment application,
- the procedure of consideration, time frameworks and the procedure of potential complaints.

Terms used in these Rules shall be written in neutral language that applies for female and male gender.

REC collaborates with other FUDŠ organisational units or other institutions that deal with similar activities or in areas of work of considered applications.

OPERATIONS AND COMPETENCES

Article 2

REC considers those proposals of researches, research projects and higher education teachers', researchers' and FUDŠ students' projects that incorporate working with people and using social science methods, especially sociological, anthropological, pedagogical, psychological, behavioural, psychotherapeutic, psychometric and non-invasive psycho-physiological or neuro-physiological or other instruments and methods that require ethical assessment.

REC assesses exclusively on the basis of submitted applications of higher education teachers, researchers and FUDŠ students who are the authors, mentors or responsible project leaders, i.e. on the appropriate form as determined by REC.

REC assesses ethical suitability of researches that are conducted at FUDŠ, i.e. also other researchers upon prior agreement.

REC has the right to monitor the implementation of researches, but it cannot in any way impact researches. Researcher shall enable REC the possibility of monitoring information, especially those that are connected to potential adverse effects.

Researchers cannot change the adopted research protocol without a preliminary consent of REC.

ORGANISATION

Article 3

REC has a president, deputy president and three regular members. Three regular members include one student representative, usually a doctoral candidate. The members of the committee are appointed by the FUDŠ Senate, whereas the student representative is appointed upon the proposal of the FUDŠ Student Council.

The FUDŠ Senate can appoint additional members with consideration of the scope of work and workload of REC.

Article 3

REC president is responsible for the following tasks:

- organisation and coordination of REC work,
- review of received applications,
- acquisition of opinions of REC members and, if necessary, of external experts,
- adoption of REC decisions,
- representation of REC in communication with third parties and organisations, and

- signing the documents issued by REC.

Deputy president conducts tasks of the president when the latter is absent. Upon the president's proposal, REC members review applications, provide opinion on their suitability and actively cooperate at REC meetings.

Article 4

For assuring a high level of expertise, REC cooperates with experts in professions that involve routine work with people in research, and with experts who can provide their opinion on the impact and potential consequences of research work on the research participants.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Article 5

REC members cannot cooperate in the assessment if there is a conflict of interests, i.e. in the following cases:

- when the application or author of the research, research project, projects or proposals is a member of REC;
- when the applicant or author of the research, research project, projects or proposals is a member of REC or co-mentor;
- when the applicant or author of the research, research task, projects or proposals is a relative of any member of REC.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

Article 6

The applied projects or researches are copyright works that contain confidential information, therefore, any use of data or their submission to third persons without the consent of the applicant, shall be prohibited or held liable by the principle of confidentiality, until the project, research or research task is concluded or published.

SCOPE OF ETHICAL ASSESSMENT

Article 7

In the process of ethical assessment, REC shall consider codes of professional ethics and principles, referring to research involving people, especially:

Ethics for researchers in the EU (http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/89888/ethics-for-researchers_en.pdf)

European Code of Conduct for Research of Integrity

(https://www.arrs.gov.si/sl/analyze/publ/inc/Evropski_kodeks_raziskovalne_postenosti.pdf)

WMA – Helsinki Declaration www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html);

APA (www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx);

Meta-Code of the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (http://www.bdp-verband.org/bdp/verband/clips/efpa_metacode_en.pdf).

Article 8

REC manages three different procedures considering the scope and type of participation, required by the research study from participants and with regard to the nature and scope of potential hazards, inconvenience or damage, to which participants of the research study can be exposed:

1. Research studies or projects without risks for participants
2. Research studies or projects with minimum risk for participants
3. Research exceeding the minimum risk

Research studies or projects without risks for participants

Article 9

When the research does not exceed normal daily (professional, educational, leisure or other) activities or participants or requires minimum participation of people cooperating in the research and identified personal data are not collected in its framework, the research has no risk for the participant, for instance:

- research conducted under regular and generally adopted educational process which is dedicated to studying educational strategies, evaluation of learning techniques efficiency, programmes and learning process management methods;
- research that bases on the usage of educational tests, surveys, interviews or public behaviour observation, when information is collected in a way that does not enable direct or indirect identification of collected data, and – in case of research work involving children – when the researcher is involved in the observed activity;
- research that bases on the collection of existing public data or data, preliminarily collected independently, where participants cannot be identified.

The assessment of ethical suitability of a research is provided by REC president or entrusted to REC member with proper professional education who can independently and with full authority of REC review the application and issue a confirmation that the research does not require REC assessment.

Research studies or projects with minimum risk for participants

Article 10

When a research exceeds normal daily (professional, educational, leisure etc.) activities, requires active participation in research or when identified personal data are collected in its framework, whereas the scope and type of potential risks, inconveniences or damage do not exceed the burden to which an individual is exposed in everyday life, the research has minimum risk.

These types of research include researches that collect personal data, but the probability and scope of expected damage and inconvenience does not exceed situations encountered by an individual in everyday life or during routine physical or psychological tests and check-ups, such as studies including the study of individual's or group's behaviour, researches that base on surveys, interviews, oral reports, focus groups and programme evaluations, and researches that base on non-invasive data collection techniques, routinely used in clinical practices.

The assessment of ethical suitability of a research is entrusted to a REC member with proper professional education who can independently and with full authority of REC review the application and issue an opinion on the basis of which the REC then forms its decision.

Research exceeding the minimum risk

Article 11

When a research incorporates elements that exceed minimum risk or are for any other reasons assessed by REC members as ethically sensitive or disputable, the research undergoes a full REC assessment.

All REC members are included in the assessment of ethical suitability of a research. REC adopts a decision on the basis of opinion of all members.

ETHICAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

Article 12

Author, mentor or responsible project leader sends the application in electronic form to REC. For student research tasks, the application is submitted by a student in agreement with the mentor. The application is submitted in electronic form on a prescribed form, i.e. to the e-mail address of FUDŠ Project Office and the mentor is also included among the recipients of the application.

Article 13

REC president sends full applications of researches that exceed minimum risk, to the appropriate REC member for further assessment. REC member who receives the application, shall verify whether the application fulfils the criteria for the proposed type of ethical assessment. If the application does not fulfil the criteria for the proposed assessment, if the recipient assesses that there has been a conflict of interest in the consideration or if the recipient assesses that the consideration requires specific research and/or professional expertise, the application is sent to another REC member, REC president or an external associate is asked for assistance.

REC adopts a decision on the basis of the provided opinion.

Article 14

For researches that incorporate greater risk for participants, are morally sensitive, or standard elements of ensuring ethical criteria cannot be included due to the nature of research, the president shall send the application for consideration to all REC members.

REC adopts a decision on the basis of opinion provided by all members.

Article 15

The applicant is notified after the decision is adopted.

In case of a positive application assessment, the applicant receives a confirmation on ethical suitability of the proposed research. If a research requires full assessment, the application shall also receive a detailed opinion and explanation.

If an application requires adjustments and supplements, the provided notes and instructions for any required modifications shall be sent to the applicant.

If the application for the assessment of ethical suitability of research is negatively assessed or rejected, detailed opinion of REC shall be sent to the applicant.

If it is necessary, the applicant shall receive the decision and the confirmed *Form for informed consent for participation in the research*. The purpose of the form is to inform the participants of the research on all important aspects of the research. When the acquisition of a consent can be deemed non-feasible, disables the implementation of research work or is a potential risk for the participant, such as for instance the research of spontaneous behaviour in everyday situations, the use of research plan that is based on deception, or a research of sexual behaviour of HIV-positive individuals and similar, the research can be conducted without a preliminary acquisition of an informed consent, if the following conditions are met:

- the research does not present more than minimum risk for the participant, and
- participant's rights and welfare are not affected.

If it is deemed possible, in such cases it must be explained in such cases before or after the research what the real nature and purpose of the research was, and to acquire written or at least oral consent for the use of collected data for scientific and research purposes.

TIMELINE OF ASSESSMENT

Article 16

The envisaged time of considering the application upon first submission, is one month, the time of consideration of potential further revisions is two weeks. Total envisaged time of application consideration is two months. This time can be extended if there are many applications submitted in a short period of time or during school holidays.

COMPLAINT

Article 17

If the applicant disagrees with the required content changes of the research, they can request for a new application assessment. The applicant shall attach a written argumentation of disputable application elements to the last revision. REC shall consider the application and submitted comments at its first ordinary, correspondence or extraordinary meeting and shall adopt a decision.

REC decision after a repeated consideration shall be final and no further complaints shall be deemed possible with regard to the considered content.

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 18

These Rules shall enter into force on the date of publication on FUDŠ website and in the higher education information system.

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Dean