**Introduction:**

Researchers can use this checklist to complete a self-assessment regarding the ethically relevant aspects of their proposed research project. The following questions are intended to serve as a guide to whether an application for a statement from the Ethics Commission should be submitted. If one or more of points 2 to 11 are answered with **YES**, the researcher should submit an application for a statement from the HAW Hamburg Ethics Commission. The self-assessment is not a substitute for a statement from the Ethics Commission. It is recommended that the completed self-assessment be kept on file with the research project documentation.

As a rule, the Ethics Commission only reviews applications that are submitted BEFORE the research work begins. Applications submitted retroactively cannot be reviewed.

If the self-assessment indicates that an ethics application is not necessary and it is subsequently the case that the Ethics Commission needs to confirm this – for example, for a publication – the checklist and a short description of the research project can be submitted to the Ethics Commission with a request for confirmation.

1. **Ethics review**

**YES NO**

* 1. Has the proposed research project already been submitted to another ethics commission in Germany for review?

* Yes: **Do not** submit an application.

* 1. Does the funder want to have an ethics statement?
* Yes: Submit an ethics application.
  1. Is an ethics statement required for a planned publication?
* Yes: Submit an ethics application.

1. **Research on and with human subjects**

**2.1. General information**

**YES NO**

* 1. Has a voluntary and informed declaration of consent[[1]](#footnote-2) for participation in the study **not** been completed?[[2]](#footnote-3)

* 1. Does the proposed research project involve something other than purely (non-interventional) observation of people in a public space or a simple survey in the form of one-on-one or group interviews or questionnaires (online or in print)?[[3]](#footnote-4)

* 1. Will topics that are sensitive, embarrassing, invasive or could be perceived   
     as stigmatising be discussed as part of individual interviews/questionnaires or   
     group interviews/questionnaires?

* 1. Could criminal or other activities that require appropriate measures possibly come to light as part of the proposed research project (e.g. a study on drug consumption)?

**2.2. Research on and with vulnerable groups**

* 1. Does the proposed research project include participants who are not able to provide informed consent?[[4]](#footnote-5)

* 1. Does it involve children/minors?

* 1. Does it involve patients?
  2. Does it involve healthy volunteers for medical studies?
  3. Does the proposed research project involve physical procedures being carried out on the participants?
  4. Are the circumstances of the proposed research project such that the choice not to participate is made more difficult (e.g. relationships of dependency)?

1. **Research on and with human cells/tissue[[5]](#footnote-6)**

Are you planning to carry out research on human cells or tissue?

1. **Research on and with human embryos/foetuses[[6]](#footnote-7)**

Are you planning to carry out research on human embryonic stem cells?

1. **Protection of personal information**

**YES NO**

Will you collect, save or process non-anonymised personal information from your own or external sources as part of your proposed research project?[[7]](#footnote-8)

1. **Human rights, sustainability**

Are the proposed research project and the accompanying goals in conflict with human rights[[8]](#footnote-9) or sustainability (particularly with respect to the United Nations sustainable development goals [[9]](#footnote-10) or the Paris agreement[[10]](#footnote-11))?

1. **Environmental protection and ecology**
2. Are the proposed research project and the accompanying goals in conflict with environmental and climate protection (particularly with respect to the United Nations sustainable development goals or the Paris agreement)?

1. Does the proposed research project contain elements that negatively impact   
   the environment, animals or plants?

1. Are you planning to carry out research on or with protected species?
2. **Technology and artificial intelligence**
   1. Will the proposed research project involve or develop technologies (hardware or software) which can be expected to have the task of ethically relevant decision-making support/preparation,[[11]](#footnote-12) or that could or are intended to make ethically relevant decisions in future?[[12]](#footnote-13)

* 1. Will the proposed research project involve or develop technologies which can be expected to violate the ethical principles of upholding human autonomy, damage prevention, fairness and explainability?[[13]](#footnote-14)

1. **Low and middle-income countries**

**YES NO**

* 1. Will resources from low or middle-income countries be used for the proposed research project, without adequate compensation of benefits?

* 1. Will data be collected in low and middle-income countries for the proposed research project, without researchers in the respective countries being   
     provided access to the data and research findings?

1. **Dual use**

* 1. Are there concerns or a more than minimal probability that the research findings could be used for military purposes?

* 1. Does the research project involve dual-use items (items with a double purpose pursuant to the EU Council Regulation 428/2009 – i.e. items that include data-processing programmes and technologies and that could be used for civil as well as military purposes)?

* 1. Does the proposed research project include cooperation partners from the non-civil sector, and is it therefore not possible to clearly demonstrate the purely civil nature of the project?

1. **Misuse**

Is there potential for your research findings to be misused?[[14]](#footnote-15)

I hereby confirm that I have answered the questions truthfully and to the best of my knowledge.

*Date, Applicant signature*

(For academic theses and dissertations, the supervisor’s signature is also required.)

1. In accordance with principles 25–32 of the Helsinki Declaration from the World Medical Association: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. If a declaration of consent has **not** been completed, you will need to check ‘no’ and submit an ethics application. Purely observational studies that take place in public are an exception: in this case an ethics application is not required, as long as the other questions under 2.1, 2.2 and 5 are answered with ‘yes’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. In the case of a purely observational study or purely survey-based studies, an ethics application is not required, as long as the other questions under 2.1, 2.2 and 5 are answered with ‘yes’. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See footnote 1 or further additions from <https://www.forschungsdaten-bildung.de/einwilligung> for comparison. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The Ethics Commission reserves the right to refer applications to the jurisdiction of another ethics commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The Ethics Commission reserves the right to refer applications to the jurisdiction of another ethics commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) should be taken into account in order to assess whether data protection is relevant to the proposed project. The regulation does not contain a definition of **anonymisation**; it provides guidelines only: ‘The principles of data protection should ... not apply to anonymous information, namely information which does not relate to an identified or identifiable natural person or to personal data rendered anonymous in such a manner that the data subject is not or no longer identifiable.’ (Recital 24 GDPR)

   ‘**Pseudonymisation** means the processing of personal data in such a manner that the personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific data subject without the use of additional information, provided that such additional information is kept separately and is subject to technical and organisational measures to ensure that the personal data are not attributed to an identified or identifiable natural person.’ (Article 4 GDPR) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/209898/beeab63c2704f684c606a65589cf236c/allgerklaerungmenschenrechte-data.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. European Union: Paris Agreement Official Journal of the European Union L282/4, Brussels (2016).   
     [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019(01)](%20https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019(01)) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. E.g. Using large amounts of data, sensor data, pictures. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. E.g. Using algorithms based on artificial intelligence (AI) such as machine learning. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Particularly in terms of the following: • The priority of human action and human supervision • Technical robustness and security • Data protection and data quality management • Transparency • Diversity, non-discrimination and fairness • Societal and ecological welfare • Accountability.

    <https://www.demographie-netzwerk.de/site/assets/files/5064/ethicsguidelinesfortrustworthyai-depdf.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. E.g. Could the materials, methods, technologies and knowledge generated cause damage to humans, animals, plants or the environment if they were changed or developed further? [↑](#footnote-ref-15)