Ethical Review Procedure

University of Amsterdam Department of Communication Science (CS)

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Ethical Review Board
Department of Communication Science (CS)
University of Amsterdam

Complementary to the Guide to the Lab

1. General information

Ethical approval is needed for all research conducted by staff and students of the UvA Department of Communication, including studies in which no participants are interviewed (e.g., content analysis, observations in the public domain, meta-analysis, etc.). It is not allowed to start your data collection if your research has not received ethical approval yet. In case a staff member cooperates with researchers from other Dutch academic institutions, only one institute needs to evaluate the study (generally, the institute of the principal researcher). In case the study has already been approved by an institute from another country, please consult the ERB member of your program group to discuss how to proceed.

An application should be submitted for each distinct part of a larger research project that requires a different factsheet and informed consent form. It is allowed to combine more parts of a project in one proposal, as long as it is 100% clear what information is relevant for which part of the project. In practice, combining subprojects is primarily used in the preparation for large European or national grants that require ethical approval when submitting.

Applications for ethical approval of research in CS can be submitted via the website of the FMG Ethical Review Board (ERB): www.lab.uva.nl/lab/ethics. *(On this website, you can choose between Ethics, Lab, Recruitment and Booking. Select the Ethics page; Selection menu is on the far left of the black/grey bar at the top).* It is not always necessary to submit student research to the ERB, teachers are allowed to grant ethical permission themselves if the research does not involve juveniles or will not be submitted for publication (See paragraph 1.2).

The member of the FMG ERB on behalf of CW is Eva van Reijmersdal (e.a.vanreijmersdal@uva.nl). However, applications will be assessed by a member of the ERB from each program group. For questions/doubts before submitting, you can contact the ERB-member from your program group:

"Corporate Corporation": Ward van Zoonen (w.vanzoonen@uva.nl)
"Persuasive Communication": Hilde Voorveld (h.a.m.voorveld@uva.nl)
"Political Communication and Journalism": Bert Bakker (b.n.bakker@uva.nl)
"Youth and Media Entertainment": Jeroen Lemmens (J.S.Lemmens@uva.nl)

Use the My Projects page on the FMG Ethics website to submit a new project for ethical approval. Please select the button of your program group, which will send your approval request to the ERB-member from your program group. If you submit, you do not need to contact them separately (unless some urgency occurs), because all correspondence is handled by the Ethics Lab Site.

Note: when submitting, please do not select "Communication Science", because in that case your request will go to Eva van Reijmersdal who will not review your request. You will need to resubmit your request to your own program group (i.e., enter all your information again, as the system unfortunately has no option, yet, to send requests from one group to another).

1.1. Submitting an application

An application for ethical approval consists of the following elements:

1. Enter the requested information at the following buttons:
   - Collaborators
   - General
   - Privacy
   - Ethics Checklist

2. Attachments (depending on your answers to the Ethics Checklist, requests for attachments will appear on the Attachments page):

   a. Factsheet and Informed consent form (both can be combined or attached separately). In case of online research, the last page of the questionnaire repeats the informed consent statement and shows the contact information of both the researcher (for more information) and the FMG Ethics Review Board (for complaints. Please also make sure to attach the message you show respondents at the end of the survey.
   - If applicable, add more factsheets and informed consent forms (e.g., in case there are more participant groups that will receive different forms (e.g. adolescents, parents, schools),

   b. Extended research description
   - Not obligatory, but sometimes background info helps to evaluate the request for ethical approval, especially for non-standard research or for research that potentially has ethical issues.
   - In case you will show materials or ask questions that may potentially be disturbing or misleading for participants please attach a description of the stimulus material (or attach a word-file with links to online material).
   - Please be as concise as possible; If you already have an extensive research description made for other purposes, resist the urge to attach this document but please edit/shorten for the purposes of ethical evaluation (max. 1 A4 is preferred).

   c. If applicable: Debriefing method
   After research has taken place in which test subjects have been misled, a full debriefing of the test subject should always take place, which addresses the way in which the test subject has been misled. The debriefing is structured in such a way that one would reasonably expect it to dispel the temporary negative effects on, for instance, self-image and mood.

   d. If applicable: Test subject recruitment text
   e. If applicable: Data processing Agreement (see **Guidelines for Sharing data**)

All procedures also apply to research conducted by external research firms or via online participant recruitment sites (i.e., if you recruit participants via a research firm, the FMG ethical procedures for your specific project need to be followed in addition to the standard

procedures of this research organisation (in as far as these do not overlap).
Timely consult the ERB member from your program group in case external firms claim that this is not needed, as this may lead to delay in the ethical approval procedure (and potentially your request for ethical approval may be rejected).

1.2. Ethical approval for student research

Ethical approval must also be obtained for research conducted by students as part of their education. This applies to all modules/theses in all student programmes (e.g., BA, MA, RM).

Applications for student research follow a different procedure. Students submit their requests to their teacher using the student form intended for this purpose. These requests will be assessed by their teacher/supervisor. This form and the accompanying instructions are provided by the College and the Graduate School. This information is provided on the Canvas pages of all modules in which students conduct research.

Note that there is a different procedure for research involving participants younger than 16. For juvenile (< 16 years) respondents or test subjects, the teacher must always submit the application for ethical approval to:

- for Master's modules, to the representative of the Ethics Committee of the appropriate program group
- for Bachelor's modules, to Eva van Reijmersdal

If you plan to publish the data from student research, you should submit a request for ethical approval to the ERB. The ERB will consider this as your research and does not communicate with students. You can ask a student to prepare the request, but you should be the *owner* of the project on the lab site and check all work of students before it is submitted for approval.

2. Standard research

In most cases, research at the University of Amsterdam CW department conforms to the conditions for standard research. A summary of these conditions is:

- The research is not of a medical nature, and no invasive procedures are applied. We consider a saliva swab or a blood sample as invasive. Heartbeat measures, facial EMG and skin conductance are not seen as invasive.

- There is no hospital involved.

- The medical or psychological risk to the participants is negligible.

- A test subject is a healthy, mentally competent adult (16 years of age or older) who participates voluntarily and has given permission to participate.

- A test subject is a healthy, mentally competent minor (15 years of age or younger) who participates voluntarily, and their parents or guardians have given active or passive permission to participate in the research.

- The researcher analyses communicative statements in publicly accessible media such as television broadcasts, print media, websites and social media.

If you think that your research does not fall within the category of standard research, or if you are not sure about that, please contact the ERB-member from your program group.

Note that the condensed instructions below mention "participants". This also refers to respondents or test subjects participating in research.

2.1. Rules for Standard research

- Each participant must be provided with a factsheet about the research (the minimum content of a factsheet is specified below) and give informed consent for each specific study. Note that this also holds when you make use of (a research panel) of a research company. An external party can only share their dataset with you if (i) participants have been informed and have agreed that their personal data might be shared with other researchers, (ii) the research goal of your study matches the research goal of the original study for which participants gave their consent. If you do not need personal data (e.g. name, identification number) please ask the external party to remove the data before sharing it with you.

- All participants must sign an informed consent form confirming that they have read and thoroughly understand the factsheet (there are some exceptions to this rule, see below). The participant receives a copy of the fact sheet and informed consent form, except for online research. In case of online research, the last page of the questionnaire repeats the contact information of both the researcher (for more information) and the FMG Ethics Review Board (for complaints).

- In case of cooperation with an institution, such as a school or company, one must avoid the impression that the school has already granted permission for their students to participate in the research (parents and students must feel free to give permission to participate, or not). A recommended text in the fact sheet is: "This study is conducted in cooperation with the xxx school."

- In case of cooperation with an institution, such as a school or company, the management of this organisation is also provided with a fact sheet and signs an informed consent form. The informed consent form contains an additional passage that the management will in no way attach consequences to members'/employees'/students' participation or non-participation.

- No pressure (including 'peer pressure') to participate may be put on people who are approached individually, as a group, or as member/employee/student of an organization or school/university.

- The anonymity of participants is guaranteed (i.e., the research will never publish or share data that can identify the participant).

- Participants have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from participation after it has begun. The factsheet should specify a term of at least seven days during which people may withdraw their data, unless withdrawal (i.e., deletion of individual data) is impossible due to anonymity. In the case of anonymous data, participants should be informed again at the end of the survey that once they submit their data, this cannot be undone.

- Participants may be misled only if the research question cannot be answered without misleading participants (e.g., providing incorrect or incomplete information).

The researcher is never permitted to mislead a test subject on important aspects of the research that might affect the participants' willingness to participate, such as risks (mental or physical), discomfort or other adverse effects (for example exposure to information, materials or questions to which they would prefer not to be exposed).
After research has taken place in which participants have been misled, a full debriefing of the test subject should always take place immediately after the participation, in which any negative effects are dispelled (for example, if false negative feedback is given on intelligence scores, physical attractiveness, or personality scores, if false information about people or organizations is given, or if temporary negative effects on self-image or mood need to be addressed). Note that correcting false information has been shown to be very difficult as people tend to keep believing it, so misleading procedures should be employed only when absolutely necessary and with the greatest care, and debriefing should be extremely clear and convincing. In most cases it works best to have a specific debriefing form for each condition.
If no temporary negative effects are expected, the debriefing may be held no later than a month after the end of the experiment.

- The information that research participants are exposed to in the framework of standard research contains no frightening, violent, erotic-pornographic, racist, sexist, undemocratic or blasphemous elements, or elements that could otherwise be deemed offensive. The experimental manipulation of such material forms no exception to this, and must always be submitted to the EC beforehand.
  Research is not classed as 'standard research' when the information to which the research participant is exposed within the framework of the research contains an evaluative or moral judgement regarding the research participant, for example that s/he is more or less attractive, intelligent or kind than other people. Experimental manipulation of these aspects can form an exception to this, on the proviso that all of the conditions for the factsheet, informed consent process and debriefing are satisfied.

- If data are collected that can be used to directly identify the participant (e.g. name, e-mail address), these data must be stored separately. For more information on how to store such data and how to use a key file, see "General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR/AVG)" on the CW-Wiki. Please note that you are not allowed to collect IP addresses of your respondents, Qualtrics does this automatically for you. To change this setting in Qualtrics, please choose "anonymize responses" in Survey Options.

Research without informed consent

- If you collect (social) media data it is not always possible to ask informed consent from your 'participants'. You are allowed to collect publicly available (social) media data under three conditions:
  1) try to minimize the personal information that you collect. So-called 'public figures' form an exception to this when they are in a public space on account of their public function or role, such as the Queen when laying a wreath, or a

famous singer during a performance. 'Public figures' are defined as people whom the majority of the target group recognize in their public role. When speaking about a specific presidential candidate by name, for example, the majority of the target group of 'voters' do not need to be explicitly told who he is; the same is true for the name of a well-known newsreader, for example, in the case of a target group of 'people who watch the news', or the name of a famous singer in the case of a target group of 'music-lovers'.

2) store the data safely; (See the **Data Storage Guidelines**);
3) do not share the data with, for instance other universities, without a data processing agreement (see **Guidelines for Sharing data** for more information on the different agreements).

- Observation of people in public spaces may occur without informed consent. Such research must be conducted with respect for privacy. Data collection occurs fully anonymously (no personal data can be registered) and unobtrusively, in accordance with local cultural values, and restricted to situations where people being studied can reasonably expect to be observed by strangers.

2.2. Rewards

Participants may receive a non-disproportionate reward, for example:

- Money: The standard award is max. €1.80 per 15 minutes, yet no more than €7.50 per 60 minutes (online research) or €10 per 60 minutes (lab/on site research). In exceptional cases, for very demanding studies, a larger reward may be justified, max €20 per hour, to be approved by the FMG ERB. If the total award is larger than €22.50, paying in cash is not allowed and a special form is needed. For payments in cash, a special excel sheet needs to be used.
  Contact the ASCoR secretariat for the forms and current procedures.
- Participation credits for CW students:
  - For online research: up to 60 minutes, 0.5 credit; more than 60 minutes, 1 credit;
  - For onsite research (or at another physical location): up to 60 minutes, 2 credits; for more than 60 minutes, 4 credits (possible more, depending on how intense the participation is for the student. This should be discussed with the Subject pool coordinator: Subjectpool-psy@uva.nl and approved by the ERB).
- Lottery: The maximum total value of the lottery in euros is equal to the number of participants (i.e., €1 per test subject). The maximum amount per participant is "research duration in percentage of an hour", multiplied by the maximum amount that can be spent. For example, for 200 participants taking a survey that lasts 15 minutes, €200 may be drawn, with the largest prize being calculated as follows: €200*0.25=€50.

The detailed rules for rewards are specified in the Guide to the lab.

2.3. Juveniles participants

Before collecting personal data from juveniles (< 16 years), permission must be obtained from the parent(s)/legal representative(s).

- When research involves minors older than 11 and younger than 16 years requires consent from both the minor and the parent(s)/ legal representative(s).
- When research involves minors younger than 12 years, only consent from the parent or legal representative is required.

Parent(s)/ legal representative (s) need to be informed in person (or in a letter sent to the home address or by email to one of the parents) about the research and they must sign a form in which they grant explicit permission for their child to participate in the research. Letters or emails to parents may not be distributed through the child. The informed consent form should make clear that one parent's consent implies that any other parent or legal guardian also grants permission. If the parent or legal representative is not present during the research (e.g., for research conducted in schools), permission should be asked at least two weeks prior to the start of the research. Juveniles for whom no informed consent has been obtained from the parent(s)/ legal representative (s) may not participate, but they do receive a similar reward to that received by their peers.

In the exceptional circumstance that no personal data is obtained parents do not have to provide their explicit consent but parents do need to be informed by means of a parental information letter (see below). Personal data are defined as all information on the basis of which someone can be identified (for example, but not limited to, a name, email address, identification number, telephone number, birthdate, photo, video or voice recordings, handwriting, genetic/biometric data, IP address and location [note that the last two are automatically collected by Qualtrix unless you set "anonymize responses" in Survey Options]). Moreover, if a combination of data can jointly result in an image so unique that it can only relate to one or a few persons, it is also seen as personal data. Lastly, the GDPR defines ethnicity, political preference, religious beliefs, medical data, and sexual preferences as sensitive personal data.

If the research procedure entails that a researcher is alone in the same room as a single juvenile below 16, a VOG ("Verklaring Omtrent Gedrag) from the Ministry of Justice and Safety is required (https://www.justis.nl/producten/vog/. This also holds for student researchers. Note that it may take some time to obtain a VOG (experience learns it can take more than the 4 weeks the VOG website communicates). The VOG of ASCoR staff and (student) research-assistants needed for ASCoR research is reimbursed by ASCoR. The VOG of students for student research is not reimbursed.

- Parental information letter:
  Before anonymous data collection, parents are informed by means of an information letter drafted together with the school. It is important that the information letters reach the parents, at the latest two weeks before data collection is planned. School (i.e. the organization that has access to parental email addresses) sends the information letter to the personal email address of the parent(s). These documents may be sent by regular mail, handed to minors with the instruction to pass it on to their parents or sent by a (digital) newsletter, on the condition that the school also sends the information letter to the parents by a personally addressed email. If a parent objects to participation of their child, it should be easy to opt out, for example by calling a

phone number or by sending an email to the designated contact person at school (e.g., a familiar teacher). Finally, the research must center on a broadly school-related topic and the load for the minor participant should be mild. For example, it entails completing a short (typically less than one hour) classroom survey or a brief individual administration of a school-related computer task. Use of stimuli or items that may be associated with negative affect (such as administering anxiety questionnaires or presenting negative IAPS pictures) or intervention studies are not permitted. If these conditions are not met an information letter is not sufficient and you will need explicit informed consent from the parents.

2.4. Minimum content to be included in factsheets for research participants

Please use the standard factsheets and informed consent texts that are provided on the CW-Wiki under "Ethical Evaluation Procedure". If this is not possible make sure to include the following aspects:

- The factsheet should be formulated in language that is easy to understand for the participants and free of jargon or uncommon abbreviations.
  Take special care when your participants are not university students, for example low educated people or juveniles. Make sure the factsheet is adapted to the reading level of your participants. If necessary, you can use a scripted oral explanation.

- How to contact the researcher, at least name and email address, preferable also telephone number (and optional office address).

- Information on the content and procedure of the research. This information must enable the participant to make a good assessment of the topic and goal of the research. In your description of the goals of the study, take into account that it is not allowed to use the data for other goals than the participants gave consent for.

  Participants must also get a good idea of the operations to be performed, duration of participation, any risks (even if these are negligible), possible mental or physical discomfort, including exposure to information, materials or questions to which they would prefer not to be exposed or which might be disturbing for some (for example, frightening, violent, erotic-pornographic, racist, sexist, undemocratic or blasphemous materials).
  If the research question prevents revealing the aim of the research beforehand, an explanation should always be provided as soon as possible after the end of the research, preferably immediately, but no later than one month after the end of data collection.

- A statement to the effect that the anonymity of participants in the research will be safeguarded, and that personal information will never be passed on to third parties without their permission.
  Also include that fully anonymized data may be shared with other researchers for scientific

purposes only (alternatively, the factsheet can state that completely anonymized data can be made publicly available). If data is shared with other Universities please mention this. The participants must agree that their personal data is shared with other researchers.

- A clear section stating that participation is always voluntary and that participants can refuse to participate in the research and can pull out at any time. In addition, they have at least up to 7 days after the research to contact the researcher to withdraw their permission for the use of their data in the research (unless anonymized data collection renders withdrawal impossible – if so, do not mention this 7 days option, but end the questionnaire with a yes/no question that the participant agrees that the data can be used for analysis. Of course, you may repeat the anonymity statement here).
  None of these actions may at any time entail adverse consequences for participants, their academic results or similar matters. All compensation 'earned' up to that point will be paid.

- If applicable: the categories of people who are advised against participating in the research due to increased medical or other risk, or possible discomfort.

- If applicable: The reward for participating in the research and the conditions under which it will be paid. If desired, a researcher may include in the factsheet a statement that no reward will be paid if there are clear indications that the participation is not being taken seriously.

- If applicable: A statement to the effect that participants are entitled to a summary of the results of the research. Participants wishing to receive this summary must be enabled to make this known to the researcher (e.g., by a question in a questionnaire, or – to prevent personal information from entering the dataset - by sending a separate email to the researcher).

- Optional: you may add that as with any research at the University of Amsterdam, a standard liability insurance applies. Depending on your sample, this may feel reassuring or worrisome.

- The following text:

Should you have any complaints or comments about this research, you can contact the Ethical Review Board of the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (AScoR) at the following address: Ethical Review Board, ASCoR Secretariat, University of Amsterdam, PO Box 15793, 1001 NG Amsterdam; 020-525 3680; ascor-secr-fmg@uva.nl.
Any complaints or comments will be treated in the strictest confidence.

2.5. Informed consent form

In case of research at a physical location, the participant and researcher should both sign the informed consent form before the study starts. The informed consent form must state that the test subject has taken note of the content of the factsheet and understands it fully. Also, the informed consent form should list all contact addresses of the researcher and the

Ethical Review Board, as stated in the factsheet. The test subject must receive a copy of the form and, if desired, a copy of the factsheet to take home.
Note that, similar to non-digitalized questionnaires, hard-copy informed consent forms should be stored. See the keyword "Archiving" on the CW-Wiki.

In case of EEG or fMRI scan, the informed consent form should include a paragraph that covers the procedure that should be followed when abnormalities or disorders of test subject are found. The test subject should supply the researcher with either the name and practice location of his general practitioner (GP), or the full practice address of their GP or general practice, who will be informed in the event that there is a finding that is of importance to the test subject. If the test subject does not have a GP, he or she should agree to notification of the student doctor or, where relevant, a company doctor. The test subject should indicate their agreement with this procedure by signing a separate clause on the informed consent form.

In case of online research, the information from the factsheet must be provided before the beginning of the research (e.g., first pages of the questionnaire), followed by an informed consent question in which approval may be granted by means of a yes/no question. The test subject should not be able to continue with the survey if (s)he answers no. The informed consent question must state that the test subject has taken note of the content of the factsheet and understands it fully. You do not need to repeat on the informed consent page information that is already on the factsheet page (or if you like, you can combine factsheet and informed consent on one page).
At the end of an online survey, repeat the contact information of the researcher (for questions and comments) and the ethical review board (for complaints).

Parental informed consent
The informed consent form for active parental consent must contain the statement that permission entails that other parents or guardians also consent.