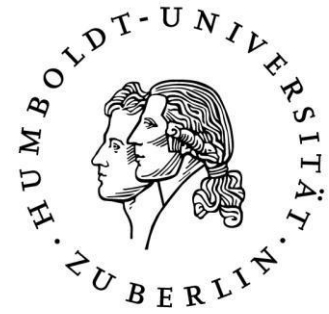# University Gazette

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Regulations
for the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Regulations

for the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Research projects at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (KSBF) of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) can also raise ethical questions. The Faculty Board of the KSBF appoints an Ethics Committee to assess these ethical aspects of research.

It is called the "Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin" (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee").[1]

§ 1 Principles and responsibilities

(1) The Faculty Board appoints a committee to review and assess the ethical justifiability of research projects. The Committee is an independent body and is not bound by instructions within the scope of the tasks assigned to it by the Faculty Board.

(2) The Committee assesses the ethical justifiability of research projects in accordance with the Regulations on the principles of HU for ensuring good scientific practice and on dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct, and takes into account the ethical guidelines of large research institutions and relevant professional associations.

(3) The current version of the applicable provisions for appointment procedures at HU shall apply for any conflicts of interest on the part of the Committee members.

(4) The Committee only acts when an application is submitted. It assesses applications for projects that are led by a member of the KSBF. Even in the case of joint projects, the affiliation of the project leader is the deciding factor. In such a case, if there are several project leaders of equal status, one must belong to the faculty.

(5) People who have received written confirmation from the KSBF Dean's Office that they will become a member of the KSBF in the future can also submit an application to the Committee, making reference to this confirmation.

(6) By derogation from para. 4, the supervisor reviews and assesses the ethical acceptability of student projects and qualification projects. The Committee provides the supervisors with a check list that provides the ethical review criteria. If an ethics vote is mandatory for publication, the student must submit an application to the Committee.

(7) The responsibility of the scientist tasked with carrying out the research project in accordance with the applicable rules of good scientific practice remains unaffected by the Committee's assessment.

§ 2 Compositions and chairpersons

(1) The Committee consists of seven voting members, four of whom are university teachers at the KSBF, who represent the range of subjects at the faculty as broadly as possible. The Committee also includes one research assistant from KSBF, one student from the KSBF and one employee responsible for technology, services and administration at KSBF.

(2) The Faculty Board of the KSBF appoints the members and the deputy members of the Committee. If a Committee member ceases to be a member of the KSBF before the end of the term of office, he/she shall also cease to be a member of the Committee

(3) The Committee elects its chairperson and deputy chairperson for the duration of the term of office. Re-election is possible. With the exception of the Committee's first term, the chairperson should already have at least one year of experience in an ethics committee.

(4) If necessary, the Committee can consult the Data Protection Officer at HU and other experts on a confidential basis.

§ 3 Management

(1) The Committee has an office in the Dean's Office of the KSBF. It keeps a directory there in which the individual procedures, decisions and minutes are recorded.

(2) The Committee's office has the following tasks:
 a) accepting and registering applications;
 b) conducting the formal preliminary review of the submitted applications and, if necessary, making any corresponding notes;
 c) requesting any missing or supplementary documents;
 d) forwarding the application documents, along with any notes or other additions, to the members of the Committee;
 e) organising Committee meetings and keeping the minutes;
 f) checking that all dates and deadlines are correct and complied with.

---

[1] The Faculty Board of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences approved the Regulations on 15 November 2017.

§ 4 Applications

(1) The leader of the relevant research project submits the application in writing using an application form. The application must be addressed to the chairperson of the Ethics Committee. The application must contain information on:
  a) the members of the team behind the research project;
  b) the content and goals of the research project;
  c) the nature of research project;
  d) the expected duration of the research project;
  e) the design of the study and the methodological approach;
  f) the participants;
  g) the handling of the collected data and other resulting data.

More details can be found in the information on the application process.

(2) It is possible to both amend and withdraw the application. The Committee must be informed immediately of any changes to the research project after the application has been submitted.

(3) The application can be submitted in both German and English.

(4) The Committee shall decide on the more specific details of the application process, e.g. about submitting the application or the forms to be used, and publish them in the manner generally used by the faculty.

§ 5 Procedure

(1) The chairperson invites the Committee to the meetings in writing, stating the time and place, and presides over the respective meetings. The invitation must be issued in writing / by email no more than seven days before the meeting and include the agenda and all other relevant documents. Individual members of the Committee can be appointed as rapporteurs.

(2) The committee meets at least once per semester. These meetings are not public. The events of the meeting and its key outcomes are to be recorded in the minutes.

(3) The regular review process, which includes an oral discussion of the application in the Committee meeting, should usually not take longer than ten weeks.

(4) An application submitted to the Committee can be assessed using the so-called "fast-track" procedure. With this accelerated review procedure, a decision on the application should be made within six weeks.

(5) In order for an application to be decided in the fast-track procedure, one of the following two conditions must be met:

  a) No test subjects or research participants are involved in the research.
  b) The test subjects and/or research participants are involved in the study to an extent that takes into account and fulfils the following criteria:

  i. No vulnerable people are involved in the research. Vulnerable people include, for example, children, young people, people with a disability, people with a mental illness, people in open or closed prisons, victims of persecution, members of threatened ethnic, religious or cultural minorities, etc.
  ii. The test subjects and/or research participants are not deceived as part of the research.
  iii. There are no risks to the physical and mental health of the test subjects or research participants that go beyond the everyday level. This also means that no drugs, intoxicants and placebos, which could possibly lead to health risks, are administered.
  iv. The test subjects and/or research participants are not offered any financial incentives. Common expense allowances are excluded from this.
  v. The test subjects or research participants are not confronted with sensitive topics and content that are deemed hurtful, disturbing, frightening, etc. or that could lead to the test subjects or research participants making statements that could have criminal consequences for themselves or others.

(6) If an application is re-submitted to the Committee, and the Committee has already discussed the specific research project, then this application must also be decided in the fast-track process, provided that it has remained essentially unchanged since the initial application.

(7) The Committee can require the applicant to submit additional documents, information, statements or other written justifications.

§ 6 Decision-making process

(1) The Committee makes its decision on the basis of the votes cast by its members.

(2) When making decisions, the Committee seeks to reach a consensus.

(3) The votes cast for submitted applications read either

> "The Committee finds that there are no ethical objections to the implementation of the research project."

> or

> "The Committee finds that there are ethical objections to the implementation of the research project and therefore rejects the application."

A rejection must be justified in writing. The applicant must be given a reasonable period of time to amend the application. The application can then be submitted again.

(4) The outcome of the deliberations is to be communicated to the applicant in writing by the chairperson or a member of the Committee appointed by him/her.

§ 7 Costs and expense allowances

(1) The review is free of charge for the applicant.

(2) The members of the Committee are not remunerated. They are not granted expense allowances.

§ 8 Final provisions

These Regulations become effective on the day after publication in the *University Gazette of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*.