

Terms of Reference (TOR): Ethical Review Committee - PGIHS

1. Background and Justification

The Ethical Review Committee (ERC) is established to ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of the PGIHS upholds the highest ethical standards. Given the human-centric and often sensitive nature of research in Humanities and Social Sciences, there is a need for structured ethical oversight to protect participants and maintain academic integrity.

2. Objectives

- To safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of human participants involved in research.
- To promote and uphold the ethical integrity of research conducted at PGIHS.
- To provide ethical clearance for research projects that meet institutional and international standards.
- To educate and guide researchers on ethical practices in research.

3. Scope of Work

The ERC shall:

- Review and evaluate research proposals involving human participants or sensitive data.
- Assess the risk-benefit ratio of proposed research activities.
- Grant or withhold ethical clearance based on compliance with ethical standards.
- Provide written ethical approvals for qualifying research projects.
- Monitor ongoing research for continued ethical compliance.
- Offer feedback and recommendations for improving ethical standards in research proposals.
- Organize awareness programs and provide ethical guidance to researchers.

4. Composition of the Committee

- Total Members: 4
 - Three academic staff members from various disciplines within the Social Sciences and Humanities.
 - One external member from a non-Humanities/Social Sciences background to provide an independent perspective.
- Chairperson: Appointed from among the four members.
- Administrative Support: Provided by the Research Secretary at PGIHS.
- Honorarium: Rs. 4,000 per meeting per member.

5. Meeting Schedule and Quorum

- Regular meetings will be held on the last Friday of each month.
- Meetings may be conducted in person or online.
- A quorum shall consist of at least three members, including the Chairperson or Acting Chair.

6. Responsibilities of Members

- Maintain confidentiality and impartiality during proposal reviews.
- Disclose any conflicts of interest prior to the review.
- Provide timely, clear, and constructive feedback to researchers.
- Attend meetings regularly and contribute to decision-making.
- Uphold and promote the ethical standards set forth by PGIHS and relevant international guidelines.

7. Responsibilities of Researchers

- Obtain mandatory ethical clearance for research projects worth 9 or more credits before data collection begins.
- Submit a complete proposal (soft and hard copies) at least two months prior to the intended start date.
- Respond to and comply with ERC feedback or conditions for approval.
- Ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and participant protection throughout the research process.

8. Proposal Submission Guidelines

- Researchers must submit a single PDF file that includes: Full research proposal including research methodology, sampling strategy, data collection tools (e.g., questionnaires, interview guides).
- Ethical Clearance Submission Form (PGIHS)

Submissions should be made to the **Research Secretary**, who will coordinate the review process.

9. Ethical Review Outcomes

The ERC may:

- Approve the proposal unconditionally.
- Approve with required modifications.
- Defer the proposal pending major revisions.
- Reject the proposal if it fails to meet ethical standards.

Written notification of the decision will be provided to the researcher.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

The ERC reserves the right to:

- Request progress reports from researchers.
- Review amendments to approved projects.
- Respond to any ethical concerns raised during the research.

11. Review and Amendments to the TOR

This TOR shall be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary by the PGIHS Board of Management. Amendments may be made to reflect evolving ethical practices, institutional needs, or regulatory changes.

Ethical Clearance Submission Form

PGIHS, University of Peradeniya

Important Notice Regarding Ethical Clearance

All MPhil and PhD students, as well as students whose research components carry more than 9 credits, must obtain ethical clearance from the PGIHS Ethical Review Committee before commencing fieldwork or data collection.

Failure to obtain ethical clearance may result in the suspension of the research component or the rejection of the final thesis/dissertation.

Ethical clearance should be obtained at least one month prior to the anticipated start of data collection.

Name of Student:

Registration Number:

Degree Programme (MPhil/PhD/Other):

Number of total Credits for Research:.....

BOS and Department:.....

Supervisor(s):

Email and Contact Number:

Title of Research Proposal:

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Estimated Duration of Research:

Please answer the following six questions clearly:

1. What are the objectives of your research and what specific research questions are you addressing?

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2. Who are the research participants? Please describe the population, sampling method, and sample size.

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3. What methods of data collection will be used (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups)? Will participants be recorded?

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4. How will informed consent be obtained from participants? Please attach your participant information sheet and consent form.

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5. What are the potential risks or ethical concerns involved in this study, and how do you plan to address them?

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6. How will you ensure the confidentiality and security of the data collected during and after the research?

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Attachments (tick as applicable):

- ☐ Full research proposal
- ☐ Research instruments (e.g., questionnaire, interview guide)
- ☐ Consent form and participant information sheet
- ☐ Letter from Supervisor (endorsing the proposal)

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sample Ethical Clearance Letter

Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (PGIHS)
University of Peradeniya
Ethical Review Committee

Date: [Insert Date]

To:

[Name of Student]
[Registration Number]
[Degree Program]
PGIHS – University of Peradeniya

Subject: Ethical Clearance for Research Proposal

The Ethical Review Committee (ERC) of PGIHS has reviewed your submission titled:

[Insert Full Title of Research]

Based on the documents submitted and the information provided, the committee is satisfied that the proposed research meets the ethical standards required for studies involving human subjects and/or sensitive data.

Accordingly, the ERC grants ethical clearance for your study, subject to the following conditions:

1. Any significant modification to the methodology/ study design must be reported to the ERC.
2. All data must be collected with prior informed consent from participants.
3. Confidentiality of participants and data security must be maintained.
4. The study must be conducted strictly as outlined in the approved proposal.

This ethical clearance is valid for a period of 12 months from the date of issue. An extension may be requested if needed.

We wish you success in your research.

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Chairperson
Ethical Review Committee
Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Peradeniya