

Rules of Procedure of the Ethical Review Board

Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Saarland University

The rules of procedure supplement the statutes of the Ethical Review Board, govern the Board's procedures and were approved by the Faculty Council on March 6, 2024.

§1 Duties

- (1) The Ethical Review Board evaluates and takes a stance on ethical aspects of planned research projects involving human subjects and personal data. The responsibility of the scientist in charge remains untouched.
- (2) The board becomes active on request, and only for projects with at least one scientist affiliated with the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science at Saarland University.
- (3) The Ethical Review Board evaluates in particular whether
 - (a) all measures to minimize the risks for the test person and the misuse of personal data have been taken,
 - (b) the ratio between benefits and risks of the project is appropriate.
- (4) The Ethical Review Board and its members are independent concerning the safeguarding of their duties and not bound by any directions. They are only responsible to their own conscience.

§2 Filing a proposal

- (1) The evaluation of a research project takes place upon request of the scientist in charge or the dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science.
- (2) The proposal is processed only if it has not yet been submitted for evaluation at any other Ethical Review Board.
- (3) The filled Basic Questionnaire (together with all necessary appendices) must be submitted electronically (as a PDF-file if possible) to the board's chairperson by the applicant(s). This questionnaire (together with the necessary appendices as specified within it serves as the basis for the ethical vote. Additional documents may be added by the applicant(s), if they serve the ethical assessment.

§3 Evaluation process and votes of the board

- (1) The Ethical Review Board takes a stance on each proposal on a case-by-case basis. Each proposal is allocated to one board member.
 - (a) If the board member concludes that none or only trivial ethical questions arise, they decide on the proposal alone.
 - (b) By default, cases in which the responsible board member identifies non-trivial ethical questions are decided on the basis of unanimous votes of three board members. If no unanimous vote is reached this way, a decision on the board's stance requires a simple majority of five board members.

The deciding board members vote on behalf of the whole Ethical Review Board. All votes must be documented in writing.

- (2) Members who contribute to the research project or whose interests are affected in such a way that they may be biased are excluded from the evaluation and decision-making process.
- (3) The Ethical Review Board regularly decides and votes electronically. Every member may demand an oral or electronic consultation with any other member.
- (4) Any board member may request that the applicant explains the project verbally and may request additional documents, information, or justifications.
- (5) If there are concerns against a proposal, the applicant may be asked to hand in a revised proposal.
- (6) The applicant may be heard by the involved board members before the board takes a stance. If the applicant wishes to be heard, they must be heard.
- (7) Votes of the board on applications are either:
 - a. "There are no ethical concerns against the implementation of the proposal", or
 - b. "There are no ethical concerns against the implementation of the proposal, if the following requirements are fulfilled:", followed by a list of requirements, or
 - c. "There are ethical concerns against the implementation of the proposal."
- (8) The decision of the Ethical Review Board must be communicated to the applicant in written form. Suggestions, recommendations, and further advice may be added to any decision.
- (9) Votes under (7c) must be justified in written form. Applicants can demand additional, written explanations or justifications of non-evident votes, requirements, and recommendations for changes in the project. An applicant may present counter arguments to a vote and demand a renewed decision of the board.
- (10) Votes may be expanded to one or more additional research projects in a simplified process under consideration of earlier board decisions.

§4 Confidentiality and documentation of the ethical review

- (1) Both the subject of the review and the board's ethical votes are not open to the public. Individual votes and details about the evaluated proposals are kept confidential.
- (2) The proposal (including potential updates/amendments), correspondence between applicants and the board, votes of the board (including potential protocols thereof) and the board's decision on the proposal must be archived for ten years.
- (3) When archiving applicant documents, data protection must be respected.

March 7, 2024

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Steimle
(Dean)