

Bylaws for the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at Universität Hamburg

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Preamble

Economic and social science research also involves the collection of data and the cooperation of people. Researchers from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at Universität Hamburg (Fakultät für Wirtschafts und Sozialwissenschaften, hereinafter referred to as “WISO”) are aware of the special relationship between researcher and those taking part in the research and ensure that the dignity and integrity of the participants are not compromised by the research. They must identify appropriate measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants and to anticipate, appropriately communicate, and reduce any potential risks.

Therefore, WISO has established a committee to evaluate the ethics of research conducted by its departments. It will be known as the ethics committee of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at Universität Hamburg (Ethikkommission der Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften der Universität Hamburg, hereinafter “WISO Ethics Committee”).

Section 1 Goals

The WISO Ethics Committee is intended to ensure that research in and by the faculty is conducted in accordance with the ethical standards established in the disciplines. The WISO Ethics Committee is thus the point of contact for WISO members seeking advice on research ethics. In addition, the WISO Ethics Committee should raise awareness of ethical aspects of research within the faculty.

Section 2 Duties

- (1) The WISO Ethics Committee acts by order of the WISO faculty of Universität Hamburg, represented by the office of the dean.
- (2) The committee has the task to provide advice to researchers applying for and conducting economics and social sciences research projects and to evaluate research ethics aspects where these are not regulated in other mandatory provisions.
- (3) In particular, the committee shall assess whether all precautions are taken to minimize potential risks for persons involved in research projects and whether the required consent of these persons or their legal representatives are adequately documented.

- (4) The WISO Ethics Committee does not review research projects with regard to legal regulations/framework conditions, such as data protection law. With regard to the assessment of legal, in particular data protection, issues, reference is made to the respective responsible bodies, in particular the data protection officer.
- (5) Following the ethical review, the WISO Ethics Committee will issue a statement on the reviewed research proposal. In doing so, the Ethics Committee limits itself to the scientific and discipline-related assessment of the ethical aspects of the research proposal.
- (6) The WISO Ethics Committee will only act on written application.
- (7) The WISO Ethics Committee will issue recommendations for dealing with specific ethical matters. Within the scope of its remit, the WISO Ethics Committee may issue further determinations and supplementary documents, which, among other things, specify requirements for the submission of an application.
- (8) In so far as the research proposal might fall into of another ethics committee and the division of responsibilities is not clearly regulated, the WISO Ethics Committee will contact the other committee to reach an agreement on the responsibility for the respective proposal.

Section 3 Basis for assessment

The WISO Ethics Committee bases its assessment on the ethical guidelines, codes, and recommendations of the relevant professional associations and considers relevant national and international recommendations for the respective disciplines, in particular those of societies and research associations as well as third party funding providers. The WISO Ethics Committee is committed to observe the Universität Hamburg's mission statement and the current versions of the "Bylaws for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice and Avoiding Scientific Misconduct at Universität Hamburg" and the "DFG Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice".

Section 4 Ethics Committee members

- (1) The WISO Ethics Committee is comprised of nine members from the WISO Faculty at Universität Hamburg, seven full professors of Universität Hamburg, a member of academic staff (who must hold a doctorate), and a doctoral researcher at the Graduate School. The participating research associates and full professors should not belong to the same professorship.
- (2) Member professors and research associates are suggested by the departmental spokesperson of the WISO Faculty an appointed via the office of the dean. The Department of Economics should nominate at least two university teachers, the Department of Social Sciences should nominate at least three university teachers, and the Department of Socioeconomics shall nominate at least two university teachers. A doctoral researcher's right to suggest nominations is granted by the chair of the WISO Graduate School. Equal gender representation should be considered when selecting members. The goal of every

appointment is to obtain a balanced representation of the Variety of disciplines and research methods at the WISO faculty.

- (3) Members are appointed for a term of two years. Reappointment is possible.
- (4) The chair of the committee and the deputy chair of the committee are elected by its voting members from among its voting members for the term of office of the WISO Ethics Committee. Reappointment is possible. The chairperson may delegate their duties to the deputy or to other members of the WISO Ethics Committee.
- (5) Any members may choose to step down from their appointment by giving written notice to the chair without giving reasons. The office of the dean may also relieve members of their duties for good cause. The member must be heard beforehand. The decision must be substantiated in writing. If a member stands down or is dismissed prior to the end of their term, the department or group which proposed that member may nominate a successor for appointment by the office of the dean for the remainder of the term of office.
- (6) The names of the WISO Ethics Committee members will be published.

Section 5 Independence and confidentiality

- (1) The members of the WISO Ethics Committee act independently in the exercise of their duties and are not bound by instructions. They must perform their duties to the best of their knowledge and in good faith.
- (2) The members of the WISO Ethics Committee are bound to confidentiality and secrecy. This applies in particular to the subject matter of the proceedings, the application documents, committee statements and correspondence, and individual opinions of committee members. This also applies to third parties and individuals providing administrative services to the WISO Ethics Committee. The right to a report based on aggregated and anonymized procedural data remains unaffected.
- (3) Members of the WISO Ethics Committee who are involved in a proposed research project currently being assessed are excluded from the particular assessment and decision-making process. Members are also not permitted to vote on applications submitted by persons with whom they have a working or other dependent relationship or where a conflict of interests exists. Members of the WISO Ethics Committee are obliged to advise the chair of the committee in writing of any facts that may prevent them from voting. Where facts may prevent the chair of the committee or their deputy from voting, they must inform the other in writing as applicable.

Section 6 Submission of applications

- (1) All members and associates of the WISO faculty who are primarily responsible for conducting research projects are authorized to make an application. Research project applications to the WISO Ethics Committee from nondoctoral graduates must be accompanied by a statement from the supervisor. Students at the faculty may apply for an evaluation of the ethical

aspects of proposed research projects required for achieving a qualification if the principal supervisor deems it necessary.

- (2) On application, the WISO Ethics Committee may evaluate research projects headed by researchers from outside the faculty where the faculty has a specific interest. This may occur, for example, when external parties intend to use the WISO Research Lab and its test subject pool.
- (3) The WISO Ethics Committee will only act in response to a written application prior to the implementation of a research project—that is, before an application for third-party-funded projects, where this is required by third parties (particularly funding providers, publishers) or where the applicant personally sees a need for advice on research ethics. The applicant is individually responsible for the submission of an application to the WISO Ethics Committee and must comply with the statutory provisions and official regulations.
- (4) The application must be submitted due in time, in a form that is complete and appropriate, and must comply with the instructions and procedural guidelines published on the WISO faculty web page by the WISO Ethics Committee. Only applications that are complete and submitted in due time will be processed. Applications may be rejected from the evaluation process for formal reasons, especially in case of incompleteness of the documents, or for substantive reasons in case the Commission is not responsible, the application may be excluded from evaluation or be referred to other bodies.
- (5) A declaration must be submitted with the application stating whether and, if relevant, where applications for the same content are or have been previously been submitted. Where available, the votes from other committees are to be attached.
- (6) The WISO Ethics Committee may act in an advisory capacity in cooperation with and at the request of other bodies and may address problems of scientific ethics in research projects as the subject of its deliberations which are conducted at the Faculty of WISO. This cooperation and these requests for advice are also covered by the confidentiality provisions pursuant to Section 5 subsection 2.

Section 7 Convocation

- (1) The chairperson convenes the WISO Ethics Committee with reasonable notice in writing or by email, informing them of the location, time, and agenda of the meeting. The WISO Ethics Committee shall meet as often as required by the application situation or at least once per semester. The meetings are not open to the public. In the meetings, which can also be held digitally the individual applications are discussed in the order determined by the chairperson. The material results of the meeting are to be logged, and the protocol of the meeting must be signed by the chair and made available to committee members.
- (2) If the chairperson deems it expedient, the researchers responsible for the proposed project may be invited to attend the meeting.

Section 8 Review procedure

- (1) WISO Ethics Committee review of proposed research projects occurs either in a regular procedure or, for proposals with minimal potential risk, through a fast-track procedure. The chairperson decides which procedure to apply.
- (2) As part of the regular process, the chairperson appoints two external reporters for each research project to be reviewed, who prepare a written statement on the ethical aspects of the research project. These statements contain the reporters' opinions on the extent to which the project can be conducted ethically, if necessary, with modifications and conditions.

The chairperson prepares the vote on the basis of these statements and their own opinion. The chair then communicates this vote to all members of the WISO Ethics Committee, together with the application documents and the statements provided by the two reporters. All members shall subsequently vote. Voting may occur by written (text form is sufficient) circulation method provided no member objects.

- (3) If the chairperson decides to conduct the review via a fast-track procedure, only one reporter is required to provide one written (text form is sufficient) statement on the ethical aspects of the proposed research project. Apart from this one difference, the procedure operates according to the same process as the regular procedure. On reasoned application by a committee member, the fast-track procedure may be converted to the regular procedure.
- (4) Usually, the regular procedure for a review of research projects in the WISO Faculty in line with the ethical standards established within the subject areas can take three to six months; for the fast-track procedure, the review will be completed in no later than six weeks.
- (5) The committee may request the applicant provide a verbal explanation of the proposed research project or supplementary documentation, information, statements, or written (text form is sufficient) justifications.
- (6) As the committee deems it necessary, the chairperson may appoint nonvoting third parties (e.g., Universität Hamburg internal or external experts who possess methodological, technical, subject-specific, real-life, philosophical, or (data protection) legal experience) to advise at meetings or provide a statement or assessment to the committee. In such cases, the external experts will be provided with the application in its entirety.
- (7) In substantiated cases and for long-term studies, the committee may issue a preliminary vote, subject to submission of further or multiple interim reports.
- (8) Applicants may communicate the votes of the WISO Ethics Committee to third parties, such as journals, external research institutes, or external-funding providers, for example. The WISO Ethics Committee must be informed of all communication of statements to third parties.
- (9) The committee must maintain a record of proceedings listing the individual procedures, decisions, and protocols of meetings. The WISO Ethics Committee must archive all documentation used in the procedures, particularly application documents, protocols of meetings, committee votes, and correspondence for 10 years after the decision has been

rendered. The documents must be kept under seal and destroyed after the ten-year period has expired.

Section 9 Decision

- (1) The Ethics Committee reviews research projects in the WISO Faculty in line with the ethical standards established in the subject areas on the basis of discussion within the committee.
- (2) In principle, the Committee seeks consensus on the vote. If consensus cannot be achieved, the committee decides by simple majority of the members voting at the meeting or by written (text form is sufficient) circulation. In case of a tied vote, the chair has the deciding vote.
- (3) Abstentions are not permitted.
- (4) Quorum is obtained when at least four voting members attend the regular meeting or have taken part in the decision-making by circulation process (in writing (text form is sufficient)).
- (5) Usually, once a decision has been adopted, it is deemed a decision made by the committee as a whole. Dissenting opinions must be logged in the protocol. Each member of the WISO Ethics Committee may present a dissenting opinion as a special vote. This must be attached to the decision.
- (6) The WISO Ethics Committee may determine that:
 - a. there are no objections to conduct a proposed research project
 - b. there are no objections to conduct a proposed research project if conducted in compliance with the conditions imposed by the WISO Ethics Committee, or
 - c. there are objections to the carrying out of a proposed research project.
- (7) If there are objections to conduct a proposed research project, the researchers must be given the opportunity to provide verbal or written (text form is sufficient) statements and to revise the design of the research project prior to the final decision being made.
- (8) The WISO Ethics Committee notifies the applicants of the decision in writing (text form is sufficient). Rejections, objections, recommendations, and conditions for modifying proposed research projects must be substantiated in writing (text form is sufficient).

Section 10 Process after issue of a vote pursuant to Section 9 subsection 6 letter a or b

- (1) The applicant must inform the WISO Ethics Committee of any subsequent changes to the proposed research project or any unexpected events in the procedure of the project without delay. This applies in particular to all significant ethical changes prior to or during the research project, especially with regard to a lack of implementation or premature

termination of the project as well as with regard to all events or conditions that have endangered individuals or infringed their personal rights or which may do so.

- (2) If subsequent changes are made to the proposed research project or unexpected events in the implementation of the proposed research project arise, the WISO Ethics Committee will hear the applicant and determine in accordance with the rules in Section 9 above whether the decision will be confirmed, revoked, or amended.
- (3) The revocation or amendment of the vote must be declared to the applicant in writing (text form is sufficient). If the proposed research project is funded through third-party funding and the decision formed part of the funding application, the third-party-funding provider may be advised of the revocation or amendment of the decision in writing (text form is sufficient).

Section 11 Compensation for costs and expenses

- (1) The WISO Ethics Committee may determine a fee schedule for assessment and advising on proposed research projects.
- (2) For Universität Hamburg members, participation as a member of the committee constitutes part of their duties. They do not receive any financial compensation.

Section 12 Legal status and disclaimer

- (1) The WISO Ethics Committee provides assistance through advising on and assessing the ethical aspects and providing impact assessments for proposed research projects. They accept no liability for any damages potentially arising in conjunction with the implementation of the proposed research project under assessment.
- (2) Members of the WISO Ethics Committee are not held personally liable in the exercise of their duties.
- (3) Votes of the ethics committee do not relieve researchers or students of their own responsibility for the proposed research project and its implementation—in particular for legal matters arising with the protection of personal data.
- (4) The WISO Ethics Committee reports once a year on its activities to the office of the dean, in anonymized form where necessary. The office of the dean accordingly reports on the activities of the WISO Ethics Committee in an annual report and in a report submitted to the faculty council.
- (5) The office of the dean decides on any changes or additions to the WISO Ethics Committee bylaws.
- (6) Insofar as these bylaws do not provide any final regulations, the statutory provisions apply accordingly.

- (7) The provisions of these rules apply subject to alternative regulations provided by higher-ranking law.

Section 13 Effective date

These rules apply after their resolution bylaw by the office of the dean of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at Universität Hamburg.