



The AISSR Ethics Advisory Board – Questions

Date: 18 March 2021

You will find the following set of questions in the online ethical portal. These questions will help you to write an ethics section. Remember that there is never just one ‘good’ answer. Not all questions are necessarily relevant in your case. And there are often tensions to face (e.g. between anonymity and openness). We hope that with everyone’s concerted efforts, we will be able to collectively assemble intelligence on what might be good research under the highly varied circumstances and in the highly varied settings in which AISSR members do their highly varied research.

Please be concise when you answer the following questions. Give short answers – and only answer the questions that are relevant in your particular case.

General

- Responsible researcher
- Who conducts the actual research?
- Are you gathering primary data for the purpose of this study or are you working with secondary data collected by others for a different purpose?
- Research location(s)
- Main research question
- Brief project description (max 150 words)
- Expected duration of the project
- Expected number of human participants (in tens, hundreds, thousands)
- This project is comparable with the following submitted project (number)

Ethics questions

[Research participants](#)

1. [Who are your human participants \(research subjects or informants\), how are you recruiting them, and in what role will they be involved? Please see also the sub-questions and the explanation below.](#)

Make clear who your research subjects or informants are and which methods you will use when dealing with them. Will your research involve vulnerable people, if so how will you accommodate that? Are you thinking of providing monetary or other kind of compensation? Please substantiate.

Working with other institutions

2. Make clear if at any stage of your research you will work with other institutions (e.g. healthcare providers, schools, refugee centres, universities, municipalities, etc.)?

If this is the case, what arrangements will you make with these institutions? How will you assure that these institutions do not treat those who participate in your research differently from those who do not? How will you maintain and communicate your relative independence from these institutions?

Informing participants

3. How will you inform participants about your research? If you work with different groups of people, please specify per group. And please, once again take note of the sub-questions.

How will you explain your research and its purposes to the people in your field? Will you ask people for their consent (verbal or written) to take part in the research? If so, what exactly will you ask them to consent to? If you use consent forms, please upload them as an attachment to the ethics portal. If paperwork is not convenient in the settings where you will be working, how will you explain that you are a researcher and the way you will be using what you learn? It could happen that you find yourself in a situation where your work is 'undercover' and cannot be discussed openly during the process of research. In this case, how will you still ensure decency, respect and fairness?

Influence on participants

4. What is the potential impact of your research (both the research process as well as the output) for those participating in it and for third parties? Does this include potential negative effects? See also the sub-questions.

What is at stake for the participants in your research and what are others likely to win or lose? First, do you intend to warn those directly involved against potential negative consequences of their participation in your research? If so, how? If not, why not? Think of situations where your informants wish to remain under the radar (such as when they are undocumented), or when governments or other organisations are at least as interested in them as you are. What kinds of risk reduction measures will you take? Do your research goals merit the risks? Second, what about other people concerned in one way or another, or other creatures involved (such as fish, if you study fisheries, and so on), what are the potential positive or negative effects for them? How do you accommodate to that?

Privacy

5. How do you protect the privacy of the people involved? See sub-questions below.

How do you protect the privacy of the people involved in your research? Will you ensure anonymity? If so, how? Will you use pseudonyms in note making or in reports, or do you plan to alter identifying information about people in your texts? Providing anonymity may come at the cost of a lack of transparency about your sources. Is that relevant in your case? If so, how do you intend to handle this tension? What will you do if the people involved actively want to be identified, or if they are public figures whose identities cannot be kept confidential?

Junior researchers and research assistants

6. Will you work with junior researchers or research assistants? If not, say so. If you will, how will you ensure that they work in accordance with the ethical style of your research? See sub-questions.

How will you train junior researchers and research assistants to work ethically? How will you track their work style over the course of the project? What are the main ethical issues you expect junior researchers and assistants to encounter? Will you communicate with them about these issues before the research? How will you support junior researchers and research assistants when they encounter new ethical dilemmas and conundrums?

Protection

7. How will you protect yourself? And (if relevant) how will you protect junior researchers and research assistants working with you? See sub-questions.

You, the other researchers and assistants involved may be confronted with physical violence, either as victim or as witness. You may feel powerless when learning about other painful situations. There may be risks in dealing with informants involved in illegal activities. You may be at risk of catching a disease. This list goes on and on. If any of these or other similar circumstances are relevant in your case, what kind of personal (practical and emotional) support will you arrange for yourself and for others involved? How will you consider coping with potential negative effects for those carrying out the research? What kind of post-research support will you arrange?

Data storage and privacy

8. Where and how will you store and protect your data? See also the sub-questions.

How in practice will you store your data? How will you protect your data? Once you have the data, there may be tensions between keeping it confidential to ensure the privacy of respondents and informants, and sharing it with fellow researchers and others. How will you juggle keeping sensitive data confidential with providing enough transparency to assure others of the validity of your results?

In other words, how will you handle the potential conflict between the ethics of data protection and the integrity ideal of data sharing? Learn more about the possibilities at <https://rdm.uva.nl/en>.

Output

9. Which ethical issues do you expect to encounter in relation to your publications? What kind of data are you planning to share, such as texts, photos, video or audio recordings? What arrangements will you make with informants (and, if applicable, with the institutions you work with) about making the results of your research publicly available? See more on this in the sub-questions.

Where, when and for whom will you publish? What, in your case, are the relevant ethical issues in this context? Where do you think your work should circulate and in which language(s)? How does this relate to your own concerns, to the concerns of your research subjects and informants, and to concerns that are otherwise pressing in the practices that you studied? Are you sure that your publications will not harm those who have put their trust in you? Think here also of visual materials: who and what is recognisable in these materials and to what effect? Have you considered what might happen to your results, what others might do with them?

Other concerns

10. Will you encounter, or do you expect to encounter, yet further ethical issues not addressed so far? For instance, concerns with regard to animals, plants or other organisms; or concerns to do with the protection or destruction of heritage objects; or to do with the legitimacy of people speaking about or on behalf of others? What will you do when new, unexpected ethical issues come up during the research project?