

For applications submitted to the Ethics Committee

Checklist for research with animals

Version 2.2 from 25 November 2024¹

Introduction

The checklist for research projects involving animals is meant to help researchers when they prepare their application for submission to the Ethics Committee in accordance with GeO §6 of the Ethics Committee. Based on the submitted documents, the Ethics Committee must be able to assess whether the animals involved in the research will be treated humanely, will be cared for properly, and unnecessary suffering avoided (GeO §10 para. 2). (*GeO = Geschäftsordnung = Rules of Procedure*)

The submitted application should be as succinct as possible and as comprehensive as necessary. The application submitted to the Ethics Committee includes a brief description of the overall research project (max. 1 page) as well as a detailed description of the ethical aspects and how they will be taken into account. Usually, this checklist for research with animals will be sufficient; however, for e.g. on-farm research on animal husbandry the checklist for research with humans is also relevant. All questions of the checklist must be answered (if a question is not relevant, please answer 'not applicable'). Your application must include the numbering of the questions and their wording, as written in the checklist.

Reference shall be made to all circumstances relevant to ethical aspects referred to in GeO §10 para. 2. The application should document an ethics-sensitive research attitude. The answers to the questions should reflect the researcher's ethical awareness and his*her careful consideration of all ethical issues in close connection with the research project, rather than merely resorting to vague generalities.

There is no standard form to fill out. However, a clearly worded, well-structured application, with all required information will reduce the need by the Ethics Committee to ask for further information or further documents, and thus ensure a rapid review process. The application may be submitted in German or English.

Applications must be submitted in good time, so that the final ethics statement can be issued before the start of data collection. Take into account, that the Ethics Committee might request additional information after discussing your application in a meeting, and that this will need to be provided before the final ethics statement can be issued.

Documents on ethics in research projects can be found on the Ethics Committee's [website](#). Especially for projects submitted to Horizon Europe, please refer to the detailed information provided by the European Commission.

For consortia projects, the overall project management is responsible for the ethics review of the overall project. For a clearly defined work package, an application may be submitted to the BOKU Ethics Committee if the work package is led by a researcher from BOKU.

¹ This document is continuously revised and updated. Please make sure that you download the latest version from the [website of the Ethics Committee](#).

Checklist for research involving animals

1. General information about the application to the Ethics Committee

- Name, e-mail, title, position (e.g. project leader, PhD student, supervisor (for research in the framework of MSc theses), and Institute of the person submitting the application to the Ethics Committee.
- Title of the application (you may add the title of the project in which the research described in this application is embedded)
- For research in the framework of a doctoral study:
 - Name of the supervisor
 - Has the supervisor reviewed and approved the application?
- For research outside of a doctoral study:
 - Name of the project leader
 - Has the project leader reviewed and approved the application?
- Funding agency to which the research project is submitted for funding
- Reason for the application: what is the statement of the Ethics Committee needed for? (e.g. requirement of journals where the results will be published, request of a funding body, see GeschO §5 para. 2).
- Give reasons as to why this research is not classified as an experiment on animals which requires legal approval.
- Should the statement of the Ethics Committee be issued in German or in English? If in English, please make sure you provide an English title for the research described in the application.
- Period of (planned) data collection

2. Research plan

Brief description of the research project or embedding of the work package in the research project (max. 1 page). Please explain for both research under laboratory and field conditions (e.g., on farms, in ecosystems):

2.1. the current state of knowledge and the objective of the research project

2.2. the research question and the hypotheses that will be tested

Describe and justify the methods, following the [ARRIVE-Guidelines 2.0](#). It may include the following aspects:

2.3. Test planning: Study design, e.g., description of treatments and controls, including groups to be compared, including control groups.

2.4. Measurement parameters: Which are collected and how?

2.5. Intervention on the animal: What is to be done, when and how often, where and why? (including capture, isolation, restraining, marking, tagging, transporting, etc.)

2.6. Experimental animals: Number, species, sex, age, stage of development, breeding line if applicable

2.7. Sample size: Explain how it was determined for the different groups

2.8. Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Describe any criteria for inclusion and exclusion of animals or groups of animals

2.9. Randomization: How are animals selected, how are they assigned to control or experimental groups?

2.10. Blinding of observers: Is blinding possible or why not? Who knows about group assignment (with/without intervention) and when?

2.11. Statistical methods: Which ones are used to test the assumptions?

3. General ethical aspects of the research project

- 3.1. What are the expected benefits to society?
- 3.2. Can the results of this study be applied to other species?
- 3.3. Are there conflicts of interest on the part of the researchers involved?
- 3.4. If students participate in the research project: how is the principle of voluntary participation taken into account? (e.g. when collecting data as part of a course, is there an alternative form to complete the course requirements?)
- 3.5. Will the project contribute to Open Data (i.e. will anonymised, processed or unprocessed raw data be made available to other researchers?). If yes: which data? When? In which repository? If not, please briefly state why not.

4. Ethical aspects of housing, care, and supervision

- 4.1. Responsible person(s)
- 4.2. Who takes care of sick animals? Who euthanizes, if necessary?
- 4.3. What data is collected on mortality (number of deaths and number of animals which had to be euthanized, reasons)?
- 4.4. What measures are taken to ensure that project staff are sufficiently qualified (knowledge, experience)?
- 4.5. Origin of the animals and what happens to the animals after the research project? Will they be re-used in other research projects?
- 4.6. How are the animals housed and kept, including environmental enrichment?
- 4.7. What measures are taken to ensure that animals can express their natural behaviours?
- 4.8. Describe the measures taken to prevent pain, suffering, and anxiety.

5. Ethical aspects of the experimental procedures

- 5.1. Who is the responsible/executing person?
- 5.2. What measures are taken to ensure that project staff are sufficiently qualified (knowledge, experience)?
- 5.3. Describe steps to minimize pain, suffering, and anxiety associated with the interventions (see 3R).
- 5.4. What treatments are applied in the framework of the experiment?
- 5.5. How will expected or unexpected adverse events be reported?
- 5.6. Are there discontinuation criteria (humane endpoints)? If yes: which? What signs are monitored and how often are they monitored?
- 5.7. How does the intervention affect post-release behaviour/survival?

6. Ethical aspects in case of interventions in the ecosystem

- 6.1. What other animal species are affected and how? Are they protected species?
- 6.2. What are the expected effects on animals not in the focus of the research project that are covered by the Animal Protection Act?
- 6.3. Which measures are being taken to minimize the suffering of vertebrates?
- 6.4. Research with vertebrates in the wild: what are the expected impacts on the ecosystem?

For further information

Website of the Ethics Committee:

<https://short.boku.ac.at/ethik>

Office of the Ethics Committee:

ethikkommission@boku.ac.at