Information on the application process and completing the application form

The joint Ethics Committee (hereinafter: committee) of the Faculties for Economics and Business Administration of the TU Dortmund, the Ruhr-University Bochum, and the University Duisburg-Essen, the Mercator School of Management of the University of Duisburg-Essen as well as the RWI assesses the ethical admissibility of research projects upon request. The responsibility of the scientist tasked with carrying out the research project in accordance with the applicable rules of good scientific practice remains unaffected by the committee's assessment. The examination is free of charge for the applicant.

General information

Eligibility to apply

- The committee only acts when an application is submitted.
- It assesses applications for projects that are led by a member of above-mentioned institutions. Even in the case joint projects, the affiliation of the project leader is the deciding factor. If there are several project leaders of equal status, one must belong to the above-mentioned institutions. People who have received written confirmation from the respective Dean's Office that they will become a member of the above-mentioned institutions in the future can also submit an application to the committee, making reference to this confirmation.
- In the case of *student projects* and *qualification projects*, the supervisor checks and assesses the ethical admissibility. If an ethics vote is mandatory for publication, the student must submit an application to the committee.

Application

- The leader of the relevant research project submits the application in writing using the application form. The application form and any annexes must be consolidated in a PDF file and sent to the chairperson of the ethics committee. The following email address should be used: ????. The application can be submitted in both German and English. It is possible to both amend and withdraw the application. The committee must be informed immediately of any changes to the research project after the application has been submitted.

Assessment procedure and duration

- The committee decides whether the application will be assessed using the regular or the so-called fast-track procedure. If all question on the „Checklist for ethics commitee" are answered with "no", the fast-track procedure is used for the assessment.
- As a general rule, the regular assessment procedure should not take longer than six weeks.

Information for completing the application form

On 1.2. If there is not enough space in the fields on the application form, name additional applicants in ***Annex IV - Additional applicants*** *(see* information on 8 below).

On 2.3. Vulnerable people include, for example, children, young people, people with a disability, people with a mental illness, people in open or closed prisons, victims of persecution, members of threatened ethnic, religious or cultural minorities, etc.

On 2.4. Deceptions leave the participants in the dark about the actual goals and/or individual aspects and steps of the research, meaning the participants do not adapt their behavior to the goals of the research, e.g. for the purposes of an assumed social desirability. The ambiguity caused by the deception can be achieved both by deliberately scattering false information and by withholding relevant information.

In other words, participants are deliberately misinformed or misinforming about integral parts of the study concerning themselves, so that they will most likely feel lied to once the truth is revealed. Examples of this would be false feedback about their performance or aims of the study, interaction with a colleague of the researcher(s) who is falsely introduced as "another study participant". Deception is not the same as not disclosing experimental manipulation and the scientific background or hypotheses of the study.

On 2.5. Experiences or situations that exceed the everyday demands and stresses of a person can pose a risk to their mental and physical health. These include, for example, unfamiliar stressful situations, the risk of retraumatisation, risks associated with research in crisis regions or in milieus on the edge of legality (see information on point 5).

On 2.6. Common expense allowances are excluded from this.

On 3.2. The short description of your research project is limited to 1500 words and is intended to give the Ethics Committee a brief overview of your project.

Please make sure you include the following sections (*please have a separate paragraph for each section*). If any sections do not apply to your project, please include them anyway and make an explicit note that they do not apply to your project.

Applications that do not take this into account will be returned immediately for revision.

Topic: Please briefly outline the topic and objective of your project.

Sample: The participants and test subjects must be precisely specified (age, gender, inclusion and exclusion criteria, desired number of participants and test subjects, etc.). In addition, it should be briefly explained here whether vulnerable people, for example, are to be included as participants and test subjects, and if so, why.

Methods: The methods must be described in such a way that the committee can already gain an initial impression of the ethical dimensions. This relates, for example, to what exactly is being examined (which parameters), how it is being examined (methods / procedures / measurement techniques & instruments), how long the examination will last (one-off, several times, time frame, duration per session), etc.

Risks: It must be briefly outlined here which potential physical and/or psychological burdens and other risks can arise for the participants and test subjects as a result of participation, and how these burdens and risks can be minimised or avoided. If, in your opinion, there are no burdens or other risks, this should be noted explicitly (e.g. "From the point of view of the experiment leader, there are no additional risks beyond the day-to-day risks that can be attributed to participation in the requested study").

Financing: Please indicate how your project is financed (funds of the university budget, third-party funds) and name the funding sources. Funding sources directly related to the requested study must be explicitly named. In addition, material support (e.g. provision of measuring instruments, consumables or other method/research-relevant material resources) must also be mentioned.

On 3.3. The Ethics Committee only assesses research projects, i.e. studies that will be carried out in the *future*. Studies that are already underway or complete are usually not reviewed.

On 3.6. Please name all people and institutions involved in a scientific and/or research function or as cooperation partners in the research project.

These include, for example, professors from other universities or market research agencies. If there is not enough room in the fields on the application form, name other applicants in ***Annex V - Additional external parties*** *(see* information on 8 below).

On 4. If you are conducting surveys, please indicate whether you use standardized questionnaires (if so, which ones) or custom questionnaires. If you use custom questionnaires, please attach them.

On 5. Pursuant to § 3 of the Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG), *personal data* refers to individual details about personal or factual circumstances of a specific or identifiable natural person (data subject).

Sensitive data is information that, if published, could have negative effects on the participants (e.g. loss of reputation, discrimination, legal consequences).

Emotional strain and *psychological stress* are deemed here to be stresses that are caused by participation, trigger a considerable degree of discomfort and, under certain circumstances, lead to participation being terminated or a request to this effect. The relevant triggers vary from person to person. Emotional strain and psychological stress on the part of the participants arise, for example, from questions about unpleasant or repressed topics, from experiments that require the participants to take on roles or make decisions that they dislike, or from restrictions on personal

freedom of action and choice (e.g. longer stays in the laboratory or interventions into the daily routine in their own home).

On 7.1. Conflicts of interest include all situations that could motivate researchers, participants, project managers or other involved parties (e.g. third-party funding providers) to incorporate non-research-related issues. Reasons for conflicts of interest are, in particular, individual financial, material or private interests or the financial, material or private interests of people with whom they have a close personal relationship.

On 8. In order to be able to assess your application in a nuanced manner, detailed explanations are required on your part that go beyond the information provided in the application form.

Please complete ***Annex I - Carrying out the research***, taking into account the following points and notes:

Methods:

- Explain the methods of your research, particularly with regard to the relevant ethical aspects (e.g. methods that are associated with the collection of sensitive data).
- Explain and justify the involvement of any vulnerable people.
- Explain and justify the methodological approach related to the need for deception in research.
- Explain special incentives in the research and their necessity.
- Explain how you deal with sensitive topics and/or content that may have an offensive, disturbing, frightening, etc. effect on the participants or test subjects, or that could lead the participants or test subjects to make statements that could have criminal consequences for themselves or others.

Sampling

- Explain and describe how your sample is composed. Explain how the participants or test subjects are identified and recruited, and which criteria are important for the selection.
- Explain to what extent participation in the study is guaranteed to be voluntary and to what extent the people contacted can also decide not to participate. Also attach a copy of your information for the participants as ***Annex II - Participant and test subject information***.
- Explain to what extent the informed consent of the participants or test subjects is obtained and in what form (verbally, in writing, electronically, etc.). You should also describe what information the participants or test subjects received about the research and the associated goals. The informed consent is closely related to the question of whether participation is voluntary. Informed consent means that participation in scientific research is first based on the most detailed and understandable information about the goals and methods of the research project and secondly with the express consent of the participants. Please also attach a copy of your consent form as ***Annex III - Declaration of consent***. If you do not obtain a declaration of consent, please also provide reasons for this.

Risks for participants and test subjects as well as researchers

- Explain the risks to the physical and mental health of the participants or test subjects that go beyond the everyday level. Also explain the strategies you are using to minimise any risks.
- Explain the risks to the physical and mental health of the researchers that go beyond the everyday level. Also explain the strategies you are using to minimise any risks.

Data handling and publication

- Explain how the data will be used in your research. Also make reference to anonymisation and pseudonymisation strategies, the storage of the data, options for data access, and the destruction of the data.
- Comment on the accessibility of the research results to the research community as well as to the participants or tests subjects and a broader public.

Annex II - Participant and test subject information

The participant and test subject information must be written in a language that is understandable to the participants and test subjects in question. It must contain the following information:

- Who is carrying out the study? (Responsibilities)
- Where is the study being carried out? (Location)
- What is being examined? (Parameters)
- Why is the study being carried out? (Brief justification / focus of the study)
- How is the study being carried out? (Methods)
- Possible risks
- Voluntary nature of participation
- Option to terminate participation at any time without consequences.
- Data protection / data deletion occurs upon termination.
- Time required for participation (once / several times / per session)
- Who is funding the study?

Annex III - Declaration of consent

- Depending on the project, this must be suitably comprehensive (see participant and test subject information).

Further annexes

- If necessary, please attach further annexes to your application. These include, for example, those already mentioned in this information: ***Annex IV - Additional applicants*** and ***Annex V - Additional external parties***.