

# Research Ethics at the Faculty of Social Sciences: Pre-screening for PhD projects

Information Event by the Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences, 1 February 2022



## Contents

- Introduction by dean Hajo Boomgaarden
- Research ethics at the Faculty of Social Sciences
  - What is the pre-screening for PhD projects?
  - The 3 stages of the pre-screening process
    - Stage 1: Preparation and online self-assessment
    - Stage 2: Public presentation at the Faculty
    - Stage 3: Preparation of empirical research
- Practical example: “walk-through”
- Q&A

## Research Ethics at the Faculty of Social Sciences

- Information, procedures, resources and support on research ethics are available on the [website](#) of the Faculty of Social Sciences
- **Pre-screening for PhD projects**  
<https://sowi.univie.ac.at/en/research/research-ethics/pre-screening-for-phd-projects/>
- and the regular [Research Ethics Screening](#) for researchers in the different departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences

### Pre-screening for PhD projects

Doctoral candidates are obliged to do this online self-assessment in preparation of the public presentation at the faculty ("fakultätsöffentliche Präsentation, FÖP") in the form of the **pre-screening for PhD projects**. The result of the self-assessment is discussed with the Doctoral Advisory Board in course of the public presentation at the Faculty. Doctoral candidates are advised to consider all comments received throughout the pre-screening.

Some departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences additionally expect affiliated doctoral candidates who successfully passed the public presentation at the Faculty to do the regular Research Ethics Screening (available for all researchers of the Faculty, see below), before they actually start the empirical research phase. In case of questions doctoral candidates should turn to their supervisor.

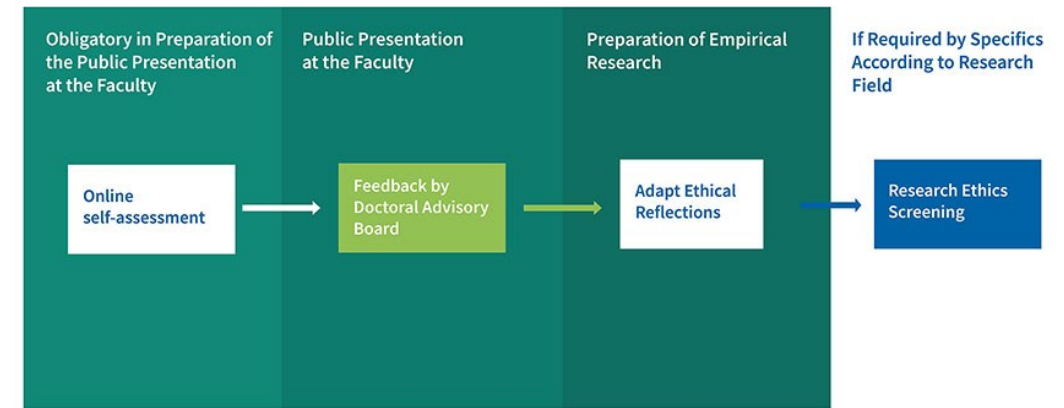
### Research Ethics Screening

Researchers at the Faculty of Social Sciences do the online self-assessment in course of the project development in the form of the **Research Ethics Screening**. Depending on the department the process is either encouraged or mandatory. At some departments it is also mandatory for doctoral candidates, who have successfully passed the public presentation at the Faculty.

The Research Ethics Screening gives researchers and project teams the possibility to reflect on potential ethical risks, problems and challenges related to their projects and to obtain feedback by the Institutional Review Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences. They either receive a confirmation, that the project can be realized on the researcher's own responsibility, or they must submit an application to the [Ethics Committee of the University of Vienna](#). Based on Austrian legislation (2002 Universities Act) and the [Statutes of the University of Vienna](#), the Ethics Committee is entitled to assess, if research projects respect the fundamental values of human dignity, liberty and health and do not violate any legal provisions.

## What is the pre-screening for PhD projects?

- Tool to support reflection on research ethics in developing research projects
- The core of the process is a (field-specific) **research ethics questionnaire** which is supposed to
  - support doctoral candidates in developing their project and
  - the Doctoral Advisory Board in discussing research ethics during the public presentation at the Faculty
- Resources and support section
  - Further information and material: Univie Support, Guidelines, Legal Regulations, ...
  - Repository of the current scholarly debate: Collection of publications on different aspects
- **Mandatory as of February 2022** in order to register for the public presentation at the Faculty



## The 3 stages of the pre-screening process

- In preparation of the public presentation at the Faculty doctoral candidates have to conduct an **online self-assessment**
- Throughout the **public presentation at the Faculty** reflections on research ethics are discussed with the Doctoral Advisory Board
- In preparation of empirical research, the **project is adapted** according to the advice received in the discussion

and depending on the specifics according to research field you would conduct the regular Research Ethics Screening

## Stage 1: Preparation and online self-assessment

- Consider the **research ethics questionnaire** early on
  - Consult the **specifics according to research field** section and **download the questionnaire**
  - Use it to identify potential ethical challenges in your project and to develop respective mitigation strategies
  - Think about including a section on research ethics in the research proposal and/or take notes on reflections in a separate document
- Conduct the **online self-assessment**
  - Have longer **answers** and the **overall ethical reflection** ready in a separate document
  - Fill out and submit the online self-assessment
  - **Sign the pre-screening confirmation** and **register** for the public presentation at the Faculty

## Stage 2: Public presentation at the Faculty

- Research proposal: you do not have to (but still can) include a section on research ethics
- **Summarize reflections on research ethics** during the public presentation at the Faculty
- **Discussion with the Doctoral Advisory Board**
  - Are these reflections and proposed mitigation strategies **coherent with the proposed research?**
  - Are there challenges suggesting an **application with the Ethics Committee** of the University of Vienna?
  - **Feedback** on ethical challenges and proposed mitigation strategies

## Stage 3: Preparation of empirical research

- Doctoral candidates are advised to **consider comments received by the Doctoral Advisory Board** throughout the public presentation at the Faculty
- Do comments and feedback suggest adaptations or further development of the project design?
- Discuss potential adaptations/reactions with your **supervisor**
- Have a look at the **specifics according to research field** to find out whether you have to conduct the regular [Research Ethics Screening](#) before you can start empirical research



## Practical example: “walk-through”

1. check-out the [website](#)
2. Download the field-specific research ethics questionnaire
3. Use it to further develop your project
4. Prepare answers and an overall ethical reflection in a document
5. Go online and fill out the online self-assessment
6. Check e-mails, sign the pre-screening confirmation and register for the FÖP
7. Present and discuss reflections and mitigation strategies at the FÖP
8. Consider the comments received and discuss reactions with supervisor
9. Check out whether the regular Research Ethics Screening is mandatory as well or not

Thank you!

Questions?