

# Initial Screening Protocol for Classifying Research Proposals

## 1. Introduction

The initial screening protocol is designed to help the Chair classify research proposals as low, medium, or high risk. This classification will guide the review process and ensure that appropriate levels of scrutiny are applied to each proposal.

## 2. Definitions

- **Low Risk:** Research that poses minimal risk to participants and does not involve sensitive topics or vulnerable populations.
- **Medium Risk:** Research that poses moderate risk to participants, may involve sensitive topics, or includes vulnerable populations.
- **High Risk:** Research that poses significant risk to participants, involves highly sensitive topics, or includes highly vulnerable populations.

## 3. Screening Criteria

The Chair will use the following criteria to classify research proposals:

### A. Participant Risk

- **Low Risk:** Minimal physical, psychological, or social risk to participants.
- **Medium Risk:** Moderate physical, psychological, or social risk to participants.
- **High Risk:** Significant physical, psychological, or social risk to participants.

### B. Sensitivity of Research Topic

- **Low Risk:** Non-sensitive topics that do not involve personal or controversial issues.
- **Medium Risk:** Moderately sensitive topics that may involve personal or controversial issues.
- **High Risk:** Highly sensitive topics that involve personal, controversial, or potentially distressing issues.

### C. Vulnerability of Population

- **Low Risk:** General population with no specific vulnerabilities.
- **Medium Risk:** Populations with some vulnerabilities (e.g., minors, elderly).
- **High Risk:** Highly vulnerable populations (e.g., individuals with disabilities, marginalized groups).

### D. Data Privacy and Confidentiality

- **Low Risk:** Research that involves minimal data collection and poses no significant risk to privacy.

- **Medium Risk:** Research that involves moderate data collection and poses some risk to privacy.
- **High Risk:** Research that involves extensive data collection and poses significant risk to privacy.

#### E. Ethical Complexity

- **Low Risk:** Research with straightforward ethical considerations.
- **Medium Risk:** Research with moderately complex ethical considerations.
- **High Risk:** Research with highly complex ethical considerations.

### 4. Screening Process

1. **Review Proposal:** The Chair reviews the research proposal, focusing on the criteria outlined above.
2. **Classify Risk Level:** Based on the criteria, the Chair classifies the proposal as low, medium, or high risk.
3. **Consultation:** For borderline cases, the Chair consults with the Departmental Ethics Officer or relevant subcommittee. Borderline cases should be referred to the full board as a matter of course.
4. **Documentation:** The Chair documents the risk classification and rationale for the decision.

### 5. Decision Making

- **Low Risk:** Reviewed by the Chair, Departmental Ethics Officer, or relevant subcommittee.
- **Medium Risk:** Reviewed by the Chair and at least one other committee member.
- **High Risk:** Reviewed by the full board.

### 6. Special Considerations

- **Consensus Requirement:** Decisions must be made by consensus between reviewers. If the majority of the board is in agreement, the minority must be consulted to see if they will agree. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair will have the final decision.
- **Specialist Consultation:** To facilitate the decision, the Chair may consult specialist advisors on the inherent risks of the proposal where appropriate.

### 7. Feedback to Researchers

- **Detailed Feedback:** Provide detailed feedback to researchers, including reasons for the risk classification and any required modifications.
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