**DERC Checklist for PS-GL Undergraduate Students**

**Doing Honours Thesis, Independent Study Projects, or Taskforce Projects**

**Objective:** This checklist serves as a guide for PS and GL undergraduate students in the NUS Department of Political Science who are undertaking empirical research for their Honours Thesis, Independent Study Projects, or Global Studies Taskforce projects. All undergraduate empirical research which involves human subjects must be subject to ethics review by the Department Ethics Review Committee (DERC). The DERC must approve the proposed research procedures before the actual empirical research is conducted. No research must be conducted before the DERC gives approval.

**Potential Outcomes:** Depending on the documentation submitted detailing the proposed research procedures, the DERC will determine whether (1) the research can be approved and conducted as proposed, or (2) the proposed procedures need to be amended in view of certain ethical concerns and revised documentation be submitted, or (3) the proposed research procedures be referred to the NUS-Institutional Review Board for further review based on the risk to research participants. Therefore, it is crucial for students to complete the relevant documentation correctly, submit them to DERC for review early, make amendments to the research procedures and the documentation expeditiously when recommended by the DERC, and reply to any enquiries by the DERC promptly where necessary.

**Documentation Required:** Submissions to the DERC for ethics review of proposed student research typically involves the submission of two documents: (1) the IRB Application Form for Social, Behavioural and Educational Research (IRB Form), and (2) the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (PISCF). The IRB Form can be obtained from the Department’s administrative staff Miss. Pang Shi Ying (sypang@nus.edu.sg) or Mr. Wesley Ngoi ([polnyjw@nus.edu.sg](mailto:polnyjw@nus.edu.sg)). The PISCF can be obtained under the “Informed Consent” category at <https://nus.edu.sg/research/irb/guidelines/sber-guidelines>. If the proposed empirical research involves interviews or surveys, then students will also have to submit a list of their proposed questions to the respondents.

**Timeline:** Ideally, students should submit the initial documentation for their proposed research procedures as early as possible for DERC’s initial review. As far as possible, this initial round of documentation should be submitted for review no later than the end of the 4th week of the semester. The DERC will strive to review all documentation as soon as possible, and reply with approval or recommendations for revision within 1-2 weeks. The student should then typically take no longer than 1 week for revisions and resubmission. Ideally, the student should receive approval for the research by the end of the recess week. This will allow the student enough time to conduct and complete the empirical research in the second half of the semester.

**Checklist for IRB Form:** This following checklist is not intended to be exhaustive. You must complete all sections of the IRB form. But the checklist highlights the key things that the DERC looks out for when undertaking ethics review of the proposed research.

1. Do you have a proper title for your proposed HT research?
2. On the bottom-right hand corner, fill in the version number and the date. The version number is 1 if you are submitting to the DERC for the first time, 2 if you are submitting and revision, and so on and so forth.
3. The Principal Investigator (PI) will be your HT supervisor. You are a co-investigator (co-PI).
4. Have you remembered to declare the target number and type of human participants in your research? Note that while the DERC can approve minimal risk research involving NUS students between 18 to under 21 years old without obtaining parental consent, human subjects who are **non-NUS students below 21 years old must provide parental permission and human subject consent** before the human subject can participate in the research.
5. Have you ensured that the PI and co-PI sign the form electronically? Forms without signatures or with only the text of the PI and co-PI names will be immediately rejected.
6. Have you used the full 300 word-limit to concisely describe an abstract of your research protocol (Section V)? Make sure to highlight what precise methodology will be used in the research.
7. Is every question in Part 4 Methodology of Section VI answered and completed?
   1. In particular, have you carefully considered and elaborated the anticipated benefits and risks of harm to human participants participating in your research (Part 4.3)? Risks of harm, for example, can include physical, mental, emotional harm – for example, potential risks of exposing their identities (e.g. through leak of research data), risks of emotional harm when asked sensitive questions, or risks of admitting to illegal behavior. This list is not exhaustive.
8. Is every question in Part 5 Data Storage of Section VI answered and completed?
   1. In answering this section, have you consulted the NUS Research Data Management Policy (RDMP)? See <http://nus.edu.sg/research/rcio/data-management> and <https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/rdm/dmp>. If necessary, request your supervisor download and share with you the RDMP. Note that all research data and results should be stored for a minimum of 10 years.
   2. Have you elaborated on what measures you have put in place to secure your research data and to protect the privacy and confidentiality of your research participants?
9. As detailed in Part 7 of Section VI, please be clear if your research method requires you to develop (1) a participant information sheet, and (2) a consent form. They are two separate things.
   1. Note that if you are conducting anonymous interviews or surveys, you do not need a consent form. But you still need a participant information sheet.
   2. Note that you can apply for a waiver of *documentation* of informed consent if you can justify your research methods in parts 7.3.1 to 7.3.4. But you still need to include a participant information sheet before recording verbal consent.
10. In Part 8 Recruitment Process, have you included a draft email or message that you will use to recruit your research participants?

**Checklist for PISCF Form:** If the student intends to conduct any form of interview or survey, the student should typically submit a full PISCF form to obtain the informed consent of the respondent. Exceptions to this rule are listed in Part 7 of Section VI of the IRB form. This following checklist is not intended to be exhaustive. You must complete all sections of the PISCF form. But the checklist highlights the key things that the DERC looks out for when undertaking ethics review of the proposed research.

1. Pages 1-2 is the participant information sheet, while pages 3-4 is the informed consent form.
2. On the bottom-right hand corner, fill in the version number and the date. The version number is 1 if you are submitting to the DERC for the first time, 2 if you are submitting and revision, and so on and so forth.
3. Have you deleted all the instructions in brackets and italics, and then filled in the necessary information in response to each question?
4. Have you deleted the unnecessary questions and sections on biological samples which are typically irrelevant in political science research?
5. Have you clearly written out all the PI and co-PI’s names and contact information, so that research participants can reach out if they have any questions or problems?

**DERC Template for Revision and Resubmission**

**For PS-GL Undergraduate Students**

**Objective:** The following template serves as a template for students to fill to reply to the DERC’s recommendations about what revisions they have done to their proposed research in their IRB forms and PISCF forms. Ideally, students should use and submit this template, in addition to the revised IRB forms and PISCF forms within 1 week of DERC’s recommendations.

Student Name:

Honours Thesis Title:

Supervisor:

Date of This Version:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **DERC’s Recommendation** | **Revision Made** |
| 1 | X |  |
| 2 | Y |  |
| 3 | Z |  |
| 4 | W |  |
| 5 | If necessary, insert more rows below. |  |