



**The Guidelines for Research and Ethics Review Board (RERB) of the
O.P. JindalGlobal University
to Promote Excellence in Ethical Practices in Research and Dissemination of
Findings¹**

The O.P. Jindal Global University was established to undertake cutting edge professional education and research in the field of business, law, international affairs and public policy. The university aims to achieve excellence in terms of research both nationally and internationally.

The establishment of the Research and Ethics Review Board (RERB henceforth) is aligned to this aim of achieving high quality research that can have academic and policy impact. The primary aim of this board would be to review and critically assess all the research undertaken in the university. Furthermore, it will also aim to develop capabilities amongst researchers in the university to develop research projects that conform to global standards of ethical guidelines.

The proposed guidelines aim to provide a broad framework to researchers based in the university to engage deeply and critically with the ethical issues emerging from their specific research questions both theoretically and empirically whilst engaging with human

¹ These guidelines have been drafted after consideration, review and consultation of research and ethics principles of the Anthropological Association of the Commonwealth, British Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association, the Indian Council for Medical Research and the World Health Organization

participants.

It takes into consideration that research in the university is undertaken in the disciplines of anthropology, business research, demography, economics, law, political science and international relations, public policy, public health, urban studies, sociology and social policy. The ethical questions are also related to the methods that are applied to carry out the studies. This includes ethnography, participant observation, in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, quantitative survey. This requires that a comprehensive set of guidelines are drafted, to facilitate, improve and strengthen the research in the university.

Most importantly, researchers undertaking empirical research that involves working with human participants should take into account the footprint that they leave behind on the lives of the people and communities they study and the manner in which the study impacts the well-being and safety of themselves, research assistants; collaborating researchers; sponsors, funders, employers and gatekeepers.

The Board will also take into consideration the specific research and ethical questions emerging from specific geographical, economic, social and cultural contexts in which research is being undertaken. The ethical protocols generally focus on minimizing risks to the research participants, researchers or institutional credibility. However, the Board will seek a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of research and ethics in terms of seeing ethical questions deeply embedded in the research question itself.

The overall aim of the RERB is to strengthen the overall research conducted in the university and also ensure that the university adheres to international standards for research and ethics to maximize the possibilities of getting research grants, publish in international journals and make a positive contribution to society. The specific objectives include:

1. To establish a centralized system of reviewing and evaluating all primary research that entails fieldwork (funded and unfunded) to be undertaken by all the faculty individually and by the centers in the university. It will review all research proposals to be submitted to the grant making bodies. It will ensure that all research conforms to the principles of ethics for good research.
2. To undertake capacity building activities amongst all the faculty members and students to develop a refined understanding of theoretical and empirical approaches

to research. This will be undertaken both as a part of the core courses undertaken by students and short-term training programmes for the staff members by experts in the field. The training will facilitate promoting self-reflective learning and application of the principles to specific research projects.

3. To network and establish linkages with grant making bodies across the world to improve the recognition of the university as a leading research university.
4. To improve the quality of publications and policy impact potential of the research undertaken in the university.
5. To facilitate in the timely clearance of research projects or proposals to grant making bodies and minimize hindrances faced by researchers while submitting their articles to publications.
6. To avert any *ex-post* legal liability stemming from the fact that the project did not get timely ethical clearance.

Guidelines for the Preparation of the Research Proposal and Evaluation of the Proposals

1. All primary research involving human participants undertaken by the faculty members, post-graduate and graduate students, visiting fellows will be subjected to the approval of the Research and Ethical Review Board based on clearly laid out and transparent principles based on response to the questions asked in the **online JotForm**: <https://form.jotform.com/222130784593053>
2. After filling the online RERB application JotForm, it should be downloaded as a PDF and **emailed to jgurerb@jgu.edu.in** along with all other necessary documents, including plain language (in the language of the research participants) statement of research, interview/survey questionnaire and informed consent statement/form etc.
3. All faculty members, post-graduate and graduate students and visiting fellows should ***apply for RERB clearance at least six weeks prior to the commencement of the project.***
4. ***All undergrad and Masters student research projects will be also submitted by the students to jgurerb@jgu.edu.in But these applications will be reviewed only by their respective School's RERB faculty representatives.*** The ethical clearance for research projects undertaken by students during an internship is the responsibility of the firm or agency recruiting them and the university RERB will not be responsible for clearing the projects. In the absence of such organizational requirement of clearance, JGU students are encouraged to follow the guidelines

specified in this document.

5. ***The specific objectives and outcomes of the research should be communicated to research participants in an appropriate way both in oral and written form.*** Any form of deception should be avoided.
6. All the information collected in the research process should be stored carefully. All the desktops and laptops should be password protected and hard copies should be locked in a cupboard.
7. The researchers should clearly identify their self in all the circumstances whilst conducting research. They should clearly state the academic and research objectives of their project so that participants do not have false hope from participating in the study. Social scientists are usually carrying out their studies with people, circumstances, communities, government agencies, multi-national corporations, schools, hospitals among others); vulnerable or minority groups (pastoral and nomadic groups), refugees or expatriate and corporate elites) who move around for various reasons (such as subsistence, ritual celebrations, pilgrimages, corporate meetings, wartime displacements) to other places or in studies in large institutions. Therefore, the researchers have to make a concerted effort to explicitly spell out that they are researchers and avoid any form of deception to the participating individuals and communities.
8. ***Individuals and communities may not be willing to be a part of any bureaucratic processes involved in research process such as signing of research consent form in written form.*** The researchers should clearly identify these difficulties at the outset of the research. ***This issue is pertinent if the research involves illiterate people or other vulnerable groups such as children, differently abled, and people with chronic illnesses or aged. It is necessary to consider these issues systematically and include them in planning for the research projects.*** The researchers should provide participants with ample time to discuss their informed consent with their friends, family and trusted authorities. This is to ensure that the well-being of the participants is not compromised at any stage of the research process.
9. ***Individual Gatekeepers: The gatekeepers for research, apart from organizational heads and their representatives, could include chiefs, local councilors, headmen, hospital consultants, trade union leaders and***

neighbourhood assemblies. It might be necessary to take into consideration the informed consent of these gate keepers and further to this consent, it is necessary to seek the consent of the individuals specifically involved in the research project.

10. If access to research participants is sought through organizations that have their respective research and ethics protocols, then the researcher should promptly provide the necessary documentation and the approval letter of the RERB that reflects the institution's commitment to good research and ethical practices.

When Research Participants are Children, Disability and People Living with Terminal Illness

11. If the research involves the participation of children in addition to consent of the child, the researcher should also seek guidance from legal guardian/ parent. The university should ensure that all the researchers undertaking research on vulnerable children and young adults are aware of child protection laws. Specifically, the researcher should have made provisions for the potential for the disclosure of abuse. They should have identified the referral services that will be able to provide social, legal and medical services to vulnerable children and the disabled.
12. The researchers should provide a detailed report on specific ethical considerations related to constraints to conducting research with vulnerable groups. Few issues include Negotiating access and communication, seeking informed consent and other legal obligations of conducting interviews in the specific jurisdiction.
13. Researchers must be aware of, and take into account, the risk of ethical failures in the design and conduct of their research. ²

² Ethical failures may include deliberately publishing made-up data, plagiarizing the work or ideas of others; taking credit for other's work, giving undue credit to someone who did not. contribute to the work, mistreating collaborators and research participants or concealing known concerns about the research process and results.

Roles, Duties and Responsibility of the Research and Ethics Review Board

14. The RERB should recognize the diversity of research methods and also ethnographic approaches emanating from the rich intellectual traditions of the humanities and social sciences. Critical theories such as feminism, disability studies, critical race theory or sociology of class and caste have had an impact on the development of social science theory and empirical approaches. These have questioned the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researcher. The broader theoretical developments in social sciences have a profound impact on methodological approaches.
15. The RERB should ensure that researchers have identified the gate keepers in their research. They should have sought their consent before entry into the community. They should have addressed the plausible power relationships between the gatekeepers and the community. Furthermore, they should seek the consent of the individuals participating in their research. If the researchers have got access to the participants through an organization, then they should take into consideration if the researcher has addressed the research and ethical protocols of that organization.
16. Research is an intrusion into people's personal lives, and it could result in limited or no benefits for these individuals. No researcher should give false hopes to the participants. It should not lead to any unwanted knowledge of one's past or life or cause any emotional discomfort. Research is a deeply reflective process which should not be restricted to addressing issues of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. The researchers should demonstrate an explicit commitment to upholding the human rights of all involved in the research process.
17. The RERB should address issues related to legal and ethical complexities involved in any research undertaken in the university. It should pay attention to specific difficulties related to age, disability, mental health issues when regular protocols of research and ethics are difficult to apply.
18. Research participants usually lose out on their time and resources while participating in the research process. In developed economies it is a usual practice to pay the research participants. However, this might be viewed with suspicion in developing economies as often researchers have limited resources as compared

to their western counterparts. If resources are available research participants may be reimbursed for their time and travel at least with minimum wages or gift coupons.

19. In general, there are several concerns associated with each research being subject to scrutiny. This led to universities becoming risk averse in light of several scandals in biomedical research. A growing criticism has suggested that increased regulation does not benefit social science. This is counterproductive in the Indian cultural milieu where human rights concerns are still marginalized in mainstream society. In such a society, the role of RERB is not only to undertake reviews of research proposals but develop capabilities amongst the staff members and students to undertake well- conceptualized research which have embedded the question of ethics at the very onset as a matter of good practice. One of the concerns is that RERB impinges on academic freedom and sets limits to academic inquiry.
20. The role of the RERB is to protect the reputation of the university and other staff members. The university has at stake financial grants from research bodies. In the case of corporate funding of projects there are concerns related to RERB working towards realizing the goals of the corporate houses rather than protecting the research interests of the academic. It is necessary to engage in critical reflection and dialogue within the institution on this issue.
21. The RERB should not result in self-censorship of the researchers. The relationship between the RERB and researchers should be one of dialogue.
22. Quantitative research is amenable to faster clearance as it does not involve close engagement with participants or working on sensitive issues. Whereas qualitative research involves closer engagement with communities or vulnerable individuals and also places researchers in a vulnerable position. Therefore, the RERB should be sensitive to qualitative research methods.
23. RERB will comprise of *at least 2 members from each school* and include: (1) A Chairperson (2) Deputy Chairperson (if required), and (3) A Member Secretary.
24. The Registrar and Deans of Schools will constitute the RERB members based on their field of expertise in research.
25. At the end of 2 years the committee will be reconstituted, and 50 percent will be

replaced with new members. The Deans should replace the members of the committee if members resign or die or if any action undertaken by the member is deemed inappropriate by the RERB Committee.

26. The RERB Committee members are required to maintain complete confidentiality of all discussions during the RERB meeting and sign a confidentiality form.
27. Members of the RERB should be aware of the local social and cultural norms as it has an important bearing on data collection in the field.
28. Meeting and Quorum Requirements: The Chairperson shall schedule RERB meetings as and when necessary. An application shall be responded to expeditiously, as given in 'levels of review' below and not later than 6 weeks from receipt. ***A minimum of five members are required to compose a quorum.***
29. The Chairperson is responsible for conducting all the meetings and if the Chairperson is not present only then can the Deputy Chairperson call the meeting, or an alternate chair can be selected. The Member Secretary will organize the meetings, maintain records and communicate with the other members. The minutes will be prepared by Member Secretary and will be approved by the Chairperson before any communication with the researcher is carried out.
30. Decision Making will be based on consensus, failing which a majority vote shall be taken. The Chair will cast the deciding vote if there is a tie. Members should withdraw from the meeting if there are conflicts of interests, the chairperson should be informed about the same and withdrawal should be recorded in the minutes. Decisions will be finalized only after completion of the quorum. Independent consultants can only provide information and will not participate in the decision – making.
31. RERB members should attend training programmes to upgrade their skills and knowledge base.
32. Record Keeping: (a) the resumes of all members should be maintained (b) copy of all studies submitted for review along with decisions (c) copy of all recent national and international guidelines (d) minutes of all meetings with the final report of approved projects (e) all documents will be archived for ten years.
33. ***Levels of Review:*** There are three levels of IRB Review:

Exempt Status (Level I): Research is reviewed for Exempt status (Level I review), by an RERB committee member if it involves very minimal or no risk. In general, research which does not propose to disrupt or manipulate the normal life experiences of participants, incorporate any form of intrusive procedures, or involve deception will be exempt from full Committee review. Projects that involve more than very minimal risk and those that include any degree of deception *do not* qualify for Exempt status.³

Decision to be communicated within 2 weeks.

Expedited Review (Level II): Expedited review (Level II review), is a procedure through which certain kinds of research may be reviewed and approved without convening a meeting of the entire RERB. These reviews will be undertaken only under exceptional circumstances for projects of importance for the university. The term “expedited” can be misleading: reviews of this type are *not* “quicker” or conducted with less rigor, but fewer reviewers are required for approval. Decision to be communicated within 4 weeks.

Full Review (Level III): All research not qualifying for **Exempt status** or **Expedited review** and most research involving protected classes of participants requires Full (Level III) review. In general research requiring Full review places the subject at greater than minimal risk. Full review means that the research protocol is read, discussed and voted upon by the full RERB committee. Decision to be communicated within 6 weeks.

³ All of the rights and protection afforded to human participants in research are required in Exempt status cases. Researchers engaged in human participants’ research that qualifies for Exempt status must still complete a full application form and prepare an informed consent statement. Researchers must engage in practices that minimize risk, maximize benefit and ensure privacy. In short, research with Exempt status is exempt only from full committee review.