1. **Is there a deadline for applications?**

There is no specific deadline for submission of an application for ethical clearance but prior approval must be sought well before data collection begins. However, for RGC GRF/ECS applications, there are specific deadlines set by the University and the RGC for submission of updates including ethical approval obtained. Applicants are strongly advised to submit their application for ethical approval as early as possible, at least 6 weeks before data collection or the deadline for obtaining ethical approval.

2. **Do I need to get approval from the principal, teachers and participants before submitting the application for ethical approval?**

Verbal agreement should be obtained from the school principals concerned to conduct research studies in their schools before submitting an application for ethical approval. After ethical approval, consent/assent from all relevant parties such as principals, teachers, parents and children should be obtained prior to commencement of data collection. Please refer to the [Operational Guidelines and Procedures of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)](https://www.fee.hku.hk/facultyresearchethics) for detailed requirements regarding parental consent and student assent.

3. **Shall I submit my interview questions for the application for ethical clearance?**

Yes, or at least an outline of interview questions should be included in the application for ethical clearance.

4. **Is ethical approval necessary for pilot studies?**

Yes. Projects involving human participants must obtain ethical approval before any data collection. This requirement is always also applicable for pilot studies. Any data collected prior to ethical approval cannot be used in any assignment, research report, oral presentation, publication or thesis.

5. **I have been given ethical approval for my pilot study. But still there is a need to do a follow-up study, such as follow-up interviews with same group of teachers; do I need to re-submit application for ethical approval?**

If ethical approval was given only for a pilot study and successive work is not approved, you must submit an application containing details of the main study separately. However, if the application submitted before the pilot study contained details of the main study and that is approved, then no second application is needed and minor changes can be reported on the ‘Application for
Amendment of an Approved Project’ (document 347/413 re-amended) downloadable from http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/ethics-compliance/hrec.

6. **Do research students need to obtain ethical approval if their thesis project is part of a larger project of their supervisor?**

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has advised that such students are required to apply for ethical approval separately for their thesis project, even though their supervisors may already have obtained ethical approval for the larger project.

7. **Do I need to submit the application in English if my research is on Chinese language, education or literature?**

All consent forms, questionnaires, interview questions and instruments used in the project in any languages other than English must be translated into English so as to provide sufficient details to facilitate the review process.

8. **I wonder if I could apply for exemption since the research methodology has nothing outside the normal practice and the research focus is on non-sensitive issues (conceptions of teaching and learning), although interviews and participant observations are in use.**

Staff members and students from non-clinical faculties, who are the PI of a research project which involves human participants in research investigations, should submit an application for ethical approval to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, as appropriate. All research, qualitative or quantitative, is covered, regardless of whether the research is funded by internal/external grants or even unfunded.

9. **I am a Co-Investigator of a project funded by an external organization. Do I need to apply for ethical clearance for the project?**

When HKU staff or students engage (other than as research participants) in research projects led by other universities/organizations that involve human participants in the research investigations, if any part of the data collection is organized through or in the name of HKU, the responsible person from HKU (including staff and students) should seek ethical approval from HKU.

10. **I am involved, as Co-Investigator, in a project in collaboration with overseas universities. Do I need to apply for ethical approval for this project?**

When HKU staff or students engage (other than as research participants) in research projects led by other universities/organizations that involve human participants in the research investigations, if any part of the data collection is organized through or in the name of HKU, the responsible person from HKU (including staff and students) should seek ethical approval from HKU.
11. My Centre has allocated funding to a non-HKU party to conduct a project. Does the project require ethical clearance?

If this is a funded project organized through or in the name of HKU, and/or if the project involves human research participants in HKU, the PI concerned is required to obtain ethical approval from our University.


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