

GUIDELINES ON ETHICAL APPROVAL

The AERC expects the research and development projects that it supports to be carried out to a high ethical standard. The following guidelines are based upon those set out by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The AERC expects the projects that it supports to be designed and conducted in such a way that they meet key ethical principles, and are subject to proper ethical research governance to ensure that these principles are met.

There are six key principles that the AERC expects to be addressed, whenever applicable:

- Research and development projects should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality
- Staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the project, what their participation entails and what risks, if any, are involved.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected
- Participants must be recruited in a voluntary way, free from any coercion
- Harm to participants must be avoided
- The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit

To implement these principles:

- The responsibility for conduct of the project in line with relevant principles rests with the principal investigator.
- The responsibility for ensuring that research is subject to appropriate ethical review, approval and monitoring lies with the organisation seeking or holding an award with the AERC.
- Ethical review should always be proportionate to the potential risk.
- Breaches of good ethical practice in AERC-funded research will be treated as a very serious matter by the Council. They could result in the immediate suspension of the individual project and other projects based at or under the coordination of the contracting organisation

Procedures

- The AERC does not require that ethical approval should be secured prior to submission of a research proposal. A proposal must state whether ethical approval is required and, if so, how it will be obtained.
- During peer review, referees and assessors will be asked to comment specifically on whether they agree with the ethical self-assessment in the proposal.
- If referees or assessors disagree with the proposed ethical review, this will either be grounds for rejection of an application or for a conditional award requiring further review.
- Before the start of a project, funds will not flow until the administering organisation provides written confirmation that the required ethical approval has been received.