This is the translation into English of the „Neufassung der Präsidiumsrichtlinie vom 15. Juli 2026 für einen Beirat für Ethikfragen in der Forschung (Ethikbeirat) an der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg“. In the event of discrepancies or differences in interpretation between the different language versions, only the official German version shall apply.

Revised Presidential committee directive for a Review Board for Ethical Issues in Research (Ethics Review Board) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg

The Presidium adopted the "Revised Presidential committee directive for a Review Board for Ethical Issues in Research (Ethics Review Board) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg" on 15th July 2026. This directive replaces the "Presidential committee directive for an Advisory Board for Ethical Issues in Research (Ethics Board) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg", which was adopted by the Presidium of Leuphana University of Lüneburg on 23.10.2012.

The following directive defines the general objectives and tasks of the Review Board for Ethical Issues in Research (Ethics Board), establishes its competence, structure, and composition, and sets the framework within which the Ethics Board issues its opinions.

§ 1 Tasks, Foundations, and Competence of the Ethics Board

(1) The Ethics Board supports the integration of Good Scientific Practice by advising and ethically reviewing research projects and by promoting awareness of research ethics issues within the university. It operates on the basis of applicable law, recognized scientific standards, relevant professional codes, and national and international recommendations, particularly those of scientific societies and associations. The Code of Conduct "Safeguarding Good Research Practice" of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Leuphana University of Lüneburg "Regulation on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice and Procedures for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct" (GSP Regulation) in their current versions are also decisive.

(2) An opinion from the Ethics Board does not relieve applicants of their responsibility to ensure compliance with the DFG Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice, the Leuphana GSP Regulation, and other relevant codes during the implementation of the research.

(3) The Ethics Board is competent for the ethical review of planned research projects from all faculties and academic institutions at Leuphana University of Lüneburg. Upon request, it examines and issues formal statements on research ethics aspects of planned projects. Its competence primarily focuses on research projects typically at the doctoral level and above.

The Ethics Board specifically examines:

a. The protection of research participants, including:
- appropriate measures to minimize risks, discrimination, and stressors for participants throughout the entire process,
- the earliest possible pseudonymization and anonymization of personal research data,
- where applicable, a balancing and documentation of the protectable interests of participants against the public interest in conducting the research, or the obtaining of informed consent,
- where applicable, respecting the special vulnerability of participants unable to consent, ensuring that informed consent is obtained from legal representatives and that an appropriate form of consent from the participants themselves is secured;

b. The information and (where applicable) consent of research participants, including:
- that study information is understandable, complete, and sufficiently detailed, including information on the processing of personal research data,
- where applicable, that informed consent is properly documented according to discipline-specific standards,

- that in cases of incomplete disclosure, this can be justified by the expected scientific gain and is accompanied by appropriate measures by the researchers (e.g., explicit notice),
- that any required official approvals for conducting the study have been obtained;

c. The methodological appropriateness of the research project, including:

- that the expected scientific gain of the project justifies any risks and stressors,
- that, as part of a plausibility check, the chosen methods are suitable to achieve the expected scientific gain;

d. Precautions for environmental, nature, animal, and climate protection, including ensuring that research projects consider potential impacts on the environment, nature, animals, and climate in the study design. The Ethics Board may issue recommendations to promote resource-efficient and environmentally compatible implementation of studies.

(4) Clinical studies fall outside the competence of the Ethics Board and must be submitted by researchers independently to a competent medical ethics committee for review.

(5) The Ethics Board is exclusively responsible for evaluating research ethics aspects of research projects. It does not conduct comprehensive legal reviews, particularly regarding data protection matters. However, the Ethics Board reserves the right to comment on such aspects and issue recommendations.

§ 2 Composition, Members, and Legal Status

(1) The Ethics Board shall consist of at least six researchers from Leuphana University of Lüneburg. Ideally, members from all faculties should be represented. This shall include at least:
- two members from the field of Psychology,
- one internal or external expert with proximity to the field of Medicine, Clinical Psychology, or adjacent health-related disciplines.

(2) Members of the Ethics Board are appointed by the Presidium in consultation with the Deans for a term of three years. Reappointment is possible. Until a newly appointed Ethics Board is constituted, outgoing members shall remain in office to ensure the continuous operational and functional capacity of the body. An equal representation of all genders should be the goal, with a quota of at least 40% women being taken into account.

(3) Members of the Ethics Board should be researchers with research experience and familiarity with the handling of research ethics issues.

(4) Chair and Deputy Chair of the Ethics Board are elected by the members from among themselves.

(5) If a member leaves the Ethics Board for formal or other reasons, the appointment of a new member during the current term is possible in accordance with § 3(1)–(3). In the event of a planned prolonged absence, a replacement may be appointed for the duration of the absence in accordance with § 3(1)–(3).

(6) The Ethics Board and its members are independent in the performance of their duties and are not bound by directions. They act according to their best knowledge and conscience.

(7) Members shall not be held personally liable for their activities on the Ethics Review Board.

(8) Participation in the Ethics Board is generally part of the official duties of members of the University. Members do not receive any compensation for this work.

(9) The Chair reports regularly, in anonymized form, to the Senate Commission for Research on the activities of the Ethics Board.

(10) Members of the Ethics Board shall receive further training on research ethics issues as needed. Leuphana University of Lüneburg shall support this in an appropriate manner.

(11) The names of the members of the Ethics Board shall be published on the website of Leuphana University of Lüneburg.

§ 3 Confidentiality

(1) The subject matter of each procedure, all votes, and the statements of the Ethics Board shall be treated confidentially. Members of the Ethics Board are bound by a duty of confidentiality. The same applies to external reviewers, experts, assistants, and persons who provide administrative support for the work of the Ethics Board (Office, see § 8).
(2) Members of the Ethics Board shall be instructed on their duty of confidentiality upon appointment. The duty of confidentiality of members shall continue to apply after leaving the board. External persons within the meaning of paragraph (1) must submit a written declaration of confidentiality.

§ 4 Application process

(1) Members or affiliates of Leuphana University of Lüneburg are eligible to apply. Applications are generally submitted by professors or research associates, as well as doctoral candidates, after consulting with their respective academic advisors or supervisors.
(2) An ethical review procedure for a research project is initiated upon application to the Office of the Ethics Board. Applications must be submitted in German or English. The official application forms provided publicly by the Ethics Board shall be used.
(3) Applications must be submitted in a timely manner so that the Ethics Board's review procedure can be completed before the start of data collection and further processing of research data. Applications submitted after data collection has already begun will not be accepted.
(4) The Ethics Board is entitled to reject the review of submitted applications in justified cases.
(5) Only formally correct applications will be processed. The formal requirements for applications are outlined in the currently valid application forms and guidelines.
(6) Applicants may withdraw their application at any time.
(7) If votes from other ethics boards already exist for proposed projects, the Ethics Board of Leuphana University of Lüneburg may, upon request, accept these opinions. There is no obligation to reapply to the Ethics Board of Leuphana University of Lüneburg; however, in the event of a new application, the board is entitled to issue a differing or supplementary statement.

§ 5 Review Process

(1) The Ethics Board conducts reviews appropriately through various procedural pathways. The different procedural pathways shall be made publicly accessible.
(2) As a rule, an application shall be reviewed within two months.
(3) Applications and the review process shall be conducted via an electronic application and review platform provided by Leuphana University of Lüneburg. Deviations from this are only permissible in justified exceptional cases, particularly in the event of technical disruptions.
(4) The Ethics Board may involve internal and external experts as reviewers in a review process to ensure additional expertise is available when evaluating specific subject-matters.
(5) As part of the respective review process, the Ethics Board may request oral or written explanations of the research project, or additional documents, information, or justifications from the applicants.

§ 6 Decision-Making

(1) The Ethics Board determines by resolution (subject to any further legal requirements) that it has provided advice on the respective research project with regard to risks related to research ethics. Within the scope of its subject-matter competence, the Ethics Review Board issues an opinion on the extent to which, in its assessment, the implementation of the project—taking into account, where appropriate, recommended adjustments and modifications, e.g., to minimize risk—appears ethically justifiable, and issues a recommendation. Recommendations may relate to the research project itself or to a follow-up review by the Ethics Board.
(2) Members who participate in the research project or whose interests are otherwise affected, such that there is a concern of bias, shall be excluded from the deliberation and decision-making process.
(3) A resolution is, in principle, a resolution of the board as a whole. The Ethics Board shall strive for consensus on the resolutions to be adopted. If consensus is not reached, it decides by majority of votes cast. Abstentions shall count as rejections.
(4) Where a review procedure as provided in § 5(1) involves the participation of a limited number of Ethics Board members, the provisions of this section shall apply accordingly.
(5) The decision shall be recorded in the form of a vote and communicated in writing or electronically (per § 6(3)) to the applicants. Negative votes and recommended adjustments to modify the research project shall be briefly justified in writing.
(6) All documents associated with the decision-making process shall be retained for ten years in compliance with the legal framework.

§ 7 Meetings

(1) The Chair convenes the Ethics Board and determines the location and time of the meeting. The Chair shall convene the Ethics Board as often as the circumstances require, but at least once per semester. The Chair opens, conducts, and closes the meetings of the Ethics Board. The results of the meetings shall be recorded in a confidential protocol.
(2) The meetings of the Ethics Board are not open to the public and may not be recorded. Meetings may be held:
    - in person,
    - via combined video and audio conference, or
    - in a hybrid combination of the two aforementioned procedures.
(3) At meetings, the Ethics Board has a quorum if more than half of its members are present.

§ 8 Office

(1) An office serves as administrative support for the activities of the Ethics Board.
(2) Among other things, it is responsible for the initial review of applications—both in terms of form and content—the selection of reviewers for the respective review process, the preparation and organization of meetings, taking minutes, correspondence with applicants, and the documentation of records throughout the application and review process. It advises applicants on the procedural steps for applying for an ethics review. It is responsible for maintaining the website, the software-based online review platform, and preparing content-related developments of the board.

§ 9 Data Processing

Processing of personal data of members and affiliates of Leuphana University of Lüneburg under this guideline, particularly with the aid of the application and review platform per § 6(3), shall be carried out on the basis of § 19(1) of the Leuphana University of Lüneburg Data Protection Regulation (DSO). For this purpose, in addition to the personal data required for the procedures under this regulation, information from applicants and project participants, as well as planning and control data for the respective project, shall be processed. Data of external participants shall be processed only with their consent.

§ 10 Entry into Force

This guideline shall enter into force on the day following its publication. Simultaneously, the Presidium Guideline for an Advisory Board for Ethical Issues in Research (Ethics Board) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg of 23.10.2012 shall cease to be in force.