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### The importance of ethical appraisal in social science research: reviewing a Faculty of Humanities' Research Ethics Committee

#### CITATION

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#### ABSTRACT

Research Ethics Committees (RECs) or Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are rapidly becoming indispensable mechanisms in the overall workings of university institutions. In fact, the ethical dimension is an important aspect of research governance processes present in institutions of higher learning. However, it is often deemed that research in the social sciences do not require ethical appraisal or clearance, because of the alleged absence of harm in conducting such research. This is an erroneous and dangerous assumption given that research in social sciences poses various and complex dilemmas related to ethics. The article aims to gauge the importance of ethical appraisal at a particular institution of higher learning's Faculty of Humanities. This is done by scrutinising its defunct REC, and the views that Heads of Departments of the Faculty have of ethics in research and the need for ethical appraisal by this REC. Finally, some suggestions are made to proceed to review and restructure the current REC with the ultimate objective to make it functional again. It was found that the development and discussion around ethics in research and ethical appraisal are part of a much needed thrust to sensitise the entire Faculty and the institution on the widespread beneficial repercussions of ethical awareness in research and beyond.