

DREAM,  
DARE, DO.

# Executive Summary

## SUSS Research Forum [Submitting an SUSS-IRB Application]

The SUSS Research Forum on “Submitting an SUSS-IRB application”, held on 23 April 2026, was presented by A/P Adrian Kwek and moderated by Dr Janice Kam. It focused on the essential role of SUSS-IRB and walked through the review process.

A/P Kwek introduced SUSS-IRB's mission, which is to ensure the protection of the rights, safety, privacy, and well-being of human participants in research. Apart from ethics reviewing, other functions include formulating policies and processes, undertaking outreach and education, facilitating internal and external audits. The fundamental principles that underpin SUSS-IRB's reviews are non-maleficence, respect for autonomy, beneficence, and justice.

He described three review categories – exemption from (further) review, expedited review, special expedited/full review. He clarified that “exemption” still requires assessment by SUSS-IRB. Research with no more than minimal risk falls under expedited review and is reviewed by 2-member Review Sub-Committee (RSC). Research with greater than minimal risk falls under special expedited review (Social, Behavioural, Education Research) or full-board review (Human Biomedical Research).

Furthermore, he emphasized that the IRB secretariat does not convey comments or recommendations by reviewers on the scientific merit of IRB applications unless they are accompanied by reason/s relevant to the protection of participants' rights.

Another key point A/P Kwek touched on was the need for research involving human subjects conducted by SUSS staff or students to be reviewed and approved by SUSS-IRB or an SUSS Programme Ethics Review Committee (PERC) before they are conducted. Justification must be cleared by SUSS-IRB if an external IRB review is necessary. Some common mistakes observed include incomplete application package, project starting date too close to submission date, minimal risk research claimed to be “no risk”, among others.

### Speaker

**A/P Adrian Kwek**  
(Social, Behavioural  
and Educational  
Research (SBER)  
Chair of SUSS's  
Institutional Review  
Board)

### Moderator

**Dr Janice Kam**  
(Member of SUSS-  
IRB)

### Reported by

Sim Hui Wen, Vera

Ivy Li Yingying

### Date

6<sup>th</sup> May 2026

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A/P Kwek then went through the annotated IRB Application Form. The first part of the form indicates all documents submitted as part of the application, such as: Participant information sheets (PISs), consent and withdrawal forms, invitation letters, recruitment advertisements, interview guides, survey questionnaires, grant documents, Gantt Chart. All research team members are required to submit CITI Program Certification according to module requirements by SUSS, including members external to SUSS. A collaborator is not considered a part of the research team and does not need to submit CITI certification.

A/P Kwek also emphasized the distinction between research – a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalisable knowledge – from non-research, such as programme evaluations, prototype developments and institutional research.

A/P Kwek reminded applicants to use simple and clear English accessible to a lay audience to explain their research. Technical terms should be defined simply at first use. Applicants should also ensure consistency across the application form and all application documents regarding research design, activities, and schedules. Modifications to the research after IRB approval require a protocol amendment to be submitted and approved before implementation.

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