



University of the
Highlands and Islands
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Participant Information Sheet Guidance

The following template and guidance notes are intended to assist researchers in designing a fit for purpose participant information sheet for their individual research project. It is important that your participant information is tailored to suit your research methodology, the age and understanding of your participant group and that the language used can be easily understood by lay people. Each section below covers key questions that researchers should consider in providing information to research participants. (NB/This template will not be suitable for NHS or Medical studies, please use NHS guidance on participant information and consent forms when making your NHS/ IRAS Online Application for Ethical Approval.)

Title of the study:

Name of department:

Date:

Introduction

The researcher should introduce themselves to the participant, providing their name and role in the University of Highlands and Islands (E.g. staff researcher, undergraduate/ postgraduate/ doctoral student). The names/ roles of any co-investigators or collaborating institutions can also be included here if appropriate.

What is the purpose of this study?

Outline the aims of the research project and what it is trying to achieve in language that can be understood by your target participant group or people unfamiliar with your subject area. Avoid using disciplinary jargon, or if you need to use terms that the general public will not recognise then explain them.

Do you have to take part?

In all research involving human participation the decision to take part in the study is entirely voluntary and should be without coercion. Participants should be informed of their rights to; freely refuse to participate, withdraw their participation at any time without explanation or penalty and/or ask for data that they have supplied to be withdrawn or destroyed.

What will you do in the project?

Participants should be given sufficient information on the nature of the research and what is expected of them in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to take part. Detail what is being asked of them e.g. completing a questionnaire, interviews, attending meetings etc, including the



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location, dates, timescale of the study and any payments/ reimbursements (e.g. travel expenses to attend interviews) can be included under this heading.

Why have you been invited to take part?

This section should explain the types of participants that are required to take part in the study and include an explanation of what kind of participant sampling is being used (e.g. any necessary screening procedures, inclusion / exclusion criteria or any special skills involved in taking part in the study.)

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

Participants should be informed of any potential risks or burdens in taking part in the research activity and any specific preparations (e.g. special diet, exercise).

What happens to the information in the project?

Participants need to be informed about the confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and security of their data in the context of the project. (The University of Highlands and Islands is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants must be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.)

If any participant data has to be disclosed or is to be shared, then this should be explained to participants. Information about how data is to be collected, stored, retained and disseminated should also be included here. Depending on your research methodology there are a number of questions to consider: Are your procedures for ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and data security fit for purpose and clearly explained? Is it clear how long data or samples will be retained and by whom? Does your participant information sheet explain the study publication policy (including anonymity if quotations, images, audio or video recordings are to be published or posted online)? Does the participant information need to consider transfer of data outside UK / EU as other countries may not have the same data protection laws?

Limits to Confidentiality. Based on the nature of your research the participant information may need to address potential disclosure. For example if a participant disclosed an intention to harm themselves or others or reported abuse to the researcher, then their information would need to be shared with the researcher's supervisor and external authorities. In cases like this, the participant information needs to make clear that any potential breach of confidentiality/ sharing of disclosed information would first be discussed with the participant.

What happens next?

Explain that if the participant is happy to be involved in the project, they will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. (* Please see Consent Form Guidance & Example Templates) You should explain the process for participants receiving feedback after the research is complete, informing them



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if the results are to be published, in what form and how anonymity will be maintained should quotations or images be published.

Thank participants for taking the time to read the Participant Information Sheet and encourage them to ask any further questions they may have before the study begins. It is important to allow enough time in your research design for participants to read through information thoroughly and feel free to ask questions if they are unsure about any aspect of the research. It may be necessary in some fields of research to also include information about support organisations or debriefing of participants after the study has completed.

Researcher contact details

This should include the name of the Researcher and University of Highlands and Islands contact details (address, phone number and email address – researchers should not include their personal contact details).

You should also include the date on which ethical approval was granted for the study:

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Highlands and Islands Research Ethics Committee and/or Faculty Research Ethics Subcommittee (delete as appropriate) on date_____.

Further contact details;

If participants have any questions/concerns, during or after the research project or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed please contact:

For undergraduate and taught postgraduate student projects:

University of the Highlands and Islands University Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

Fiona Ryan, Faculty Research Ethics Officer

University of the Highlands and Islands, 12b Ness Walk, Inverness, IV3 5SQ.

Telephone: 01463-279347

Email: faculty.research.ethics@uhi.ac.uk

For staff, postgraduate/ PHD student research projects:

University of the Highlands and Islands Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

UHI Research Ethics Officer

University of the Highlands and Islands, 12b Ness Walk, Inverness, IV3 5SQ.

Telephone: 01463-279349

Email: research.ethics@uhi.ac.uk

The research ethics committee officers would inform the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee in the first instance and/ or escalate the query to the university's Chief Operating Officer and Secretary as appropriate.



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Example Research Participant Information Sheet

Title of the study:

Name of department:

Date:

Introduction

What is the purpose of this investigation?

Do you have to take part?

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation and have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn or destroyed.

What will you do in the project?

Why have you been invited to take part?

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

What happens to the information in the project?

What happens next?

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet. If you have any further questions or require any further information please ask before the study begins.



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Researcher contact details;

Name;

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Highlands and Islands Research Ethics Committee and/or Faculty Research Ethics Subcommittee (delete as appropriate) on date_____.

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