

# Research Study Participant Information Sheet (*template*)

The participant consent form should be accompanied by a participant information sheet, displaying the current Open University logo and full contact details of the PI / researcher.

The information sheet should normally include the following information (blue text indicates optional content):

# Study title

* The title should be simple and self-explanatory to a lay person.
* Information on who is running the study,

# Contact details

* PI name and contact details (OU email address and suitable telephone contact number as appropriate)
* An alternative independent contact should also be provided (OU telephone number and OU email address). This should be an OU member of staff but someone who is not directly involved in the research (e.g. a Head of Department, postgraduate research degree students should use their supervisor), so participants have an impartial contact should they have any concerns about the way the research project is being conducted.

# Invitation paragraph

This should explain that the individual is being asked to take part in a research study. The following is an example of how this may be phrased:

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully'.

It may also be appropriate to explain why the individual has been chosen to take part, and who else has been invited to participate.

If your study involves the recruitment of students or pupils you must explain that choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on their marks, assessments or future studies.

If your study involves the recruitment of employees, you must explain that choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on their evaluation and progression at work.

# General information about the research study and collected research data

Include the following information here, in terms that a lay person can easily understand:

* The purpose of the research, who is running the study, including any funders/collaborators involved.
* Ethics committee review and favourable opinion/agreement gained for the study (where the project has required formal review by HREC) , for example the following statement could be used: “This research project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number: XXXX.”
* Type of research intervention, e.g. interview, survey, observation, etc.
* How long the study will run.

# What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?

Here describe:

* What will be required of participants who choose to take part (what they will do, how much time involved, etc.)
* Explain that participation is **entirely voluntary**. For example, you could say:

'It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.’

* Outline any direct benefits for the individual and any other beneficial outcomes of the study, including furthering our understanding of the topic.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? You should describe any disadvantages or 'costs' involved in taking part in the study.

# How will the data I provide be used?

Provide information on:

* How the data collected will be stored (e.g. on a secure server, in a locked filing cabinet, etc.) and for how long (i.e. when will any data be destroyed). Please refer to the OU [RDM policy](http://www.open.ac.uk/library-research-support/research-data-management), [Retention Schedule](https://openuniv.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-information-rights/Pages/retention-schedule.aspx) and [GDPR – How does it affect Research Data Management and data sharing?](http://www.open.ac.uk/library-research-support/research-data-management/ethics-and-data-protection)
* How confidentiality/anonymity will be ensured (e.g. no personally identifying information will be recorded, quotes will be anonymised/paraphrased, etc.).
* How any personal information is collected (e.g. signed consent forms, email addresses in online surveys, video recordings/photos, etc.), how it will be processed and stored and for how long.
* How any data collected will be disseminated/shared (e.g. sharing research findings with participants, third parties, in publications, on social media, etc.; procedures for anonymising data before dissemination/sharing in order to ensure confidentiality1).
* Archiving and re-use of the data (e.g. storing in repository, in anonymised/de-identified form, etc.).

1In some studies, it may be that personal information will be shared (e.g. in research where participants wish to have their names attached to their verbatim comments), so data will not remain confidential/anonymous. In these cases be clear on any risks involved, and exactly how the personal data will be used/shared (where [e.g. social media], with whom, for how long, etc.).

If data are to be shared/stored outside the UK/EU (e.g. in online surveys using third party software), provide information on how this storage complies with data protection regulations (e.g. Qualtrics survey software complies with UK/EU data protection regulations). Where the research is collaborative, the PI must ensure and state that any international partners are fully DP compliant.

# Your right to withdraw from the study

* You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation by... (provide details on how to do this, e.g. click 'withdraw survey' button, leave focus group session, etc.).
* You have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the study by... (provide details, e.g. contact researcher on 'email address'), up until... (provide point after which withdrawal is not possible, e.g. 'up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis', also providing a specific date, e.g. ‘end of March 2021’).

# How do I agree to take part?

Explain exactly how the participant should 'opt in' for the study (e.g. visit the online survey link and complete the consent form, sign and return the consent form by post, email the researcher, etc.).

# Thank you

Remember to thank the individual for taking time to read the information sheet.

# Data Protection

The Open University is the Data Controller for the personal data that you provide.

[If there are any joint data controllers (research partners or funders) then include this information. This should be identifiable from any research agreements or funding contracts.

The lawful reason for processing your data will be that conducting academic research is part of The Open University’s public task. (The consent we request from you relates to ethical considerations)

[If any use will be made of the personal data in addition to analysis of the research, then the appropriate lawful basis needs to be considered. If any marketing communications will arise, this is likely to require consent]

We share the information you have given to us with xx organisations in order to xxx

[If you transfer or share the information with research partners or other third parties, including subcontractors, e.g. for providing transcripts, then say this.] The lawful reason for these transfers is that it is part of our public task to conduct academic research [and/ or] Where we use a third party to provide a service, it is in our legitimate interest to manage our operations effectively. They will only be given personal data in order to carry out a specific activity, and we have contractual arrangements to safeguard their use of your personal data.

[state your retention period for the personal data, if you haven’t mentioned it above]

[say if any data will be transferred or stored outside the UK/EEA, eg by partners/ contractors/cloud services, and what safeguards you are taking]

You have a number of rights as a data subject:

* To request a copy of the personal data we have about you
* To rectify any personal data which is inaccurate or incomplete
* To restrict the processing of your data
* To receive a copy of your data in an easily transferrable format (if relevant)
* To erase your data
* To object to us processing your data

If you are concerned about the way we have processed your personal information, you can contact the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). Please visit the ICO’s website for further details.