

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE**

**This is a template that can be adapted for your own project. Using this template is not essential – you are free to develop your own version. Participant Information Sheets must be accessible for participants (e.g. use clear language, be clearly laid out and not overly long). The PIS, covering letter or leaflet should generally include a University of Edinburgh logo and funder logos, if relevant. Even if you do not use this template, working through the sections below may help you clarify appropriate practice for your own project.**

### Project title

The title should be simple and self-explanatory to a lay person and should appear on all your project documentation. Any acronyms need to be written out in full.

### Invitation paragraph

This should explain that the individual is being invited to take part in a research project, e.g.:

'You are being invited to take part in a research project. 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. Ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not to take part.’

### What is the purpose of the project?

The background and the aim of the project should be given here. Include how long the project will run and a brief outline of the overall design of the project.

*The purpose of this project is to [summarise research focus and aims.]*

### Why have I been invited to participate?

Explain how the project is recruiting participants or how the individual was chosen to take part and perhaps how many other people will be asked to participate.

*You have been invited to participate in this study because [explain how or why they have been recruited into the project.]*

### Do I have to take part?

Explain that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. If the research is linked to a service that participants are receiving, do reassure them that the service or care they receive will not be affected, and that service providers will not have access to their raw data at the present time/or ever, as appropriate; or specify if data may be made available (and whether it is anonymised), either directly through plans to share datasets, or selected data through project reports, or indirectly through any open datasets made public through the project. Similarly, if they are students/ reassure them that lecturers cannot access their research data and their marks will not be affected, whether or not they decide to take part. For example:

'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 Participant Information Sheet to keep and be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the study at a later date, without giving a reason and without any impact on any services you are using*. Only the project team will have access to the research data until [date].’*

### What does taking part involve?

Explain your methods of data collection, including what the individual will be asked to do (e.g. fill out a questionnaire; keep a diary; be interviewed etc), how much time will be involved, whether the research involves a one-off involvement or repeat or ongoing encounters, and where the research will take place, e.g. location of interviews. If the project will involve video/audio-recording or photography, explain what equipment might be used and what will be involved for participants, including confidentiality issues. If subsequent publications or other outputs will identify the participant, make sure this is explicit.

*You will be asked a number of questions regarding [describe research topic and the kind of data you require]. The questionnaire/interview/focus group etc will take place in [location] at a time that it is convenient for you and will last approximately [duration]. The interview will be audio-recorded / video-recorded.*

### are there any possible risks or disadvantages in taking part? (where relevant)

Describe any disadvantages or 'costs' to taking part in the project, including the time involved, and if there are possible risks, describe any safeguards or mitigating measures to address those risks.

*There are no significant risks anticipated from participation in this research project.*

### What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Outline any direct benefits for the individual and any other hoped for beneficial outcomes of the project, including furthering our understanding of the topic. Explain any benefits, but where there is no intended direct benefit for the participant, this should be stated clearly. It is important not to exaggerate the possible benefits. There is useful discussion here on benefits of participation: <http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/How-is-benefit-defined-65>. For example:

*By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping [PI/researcher name] and the University to better understand [research topic].*

### Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or for my time?

If you are providing any travel expenses, or small gifts, payments, tokens etc, as recompense for participants’ time, please explain this here, and how and when they will receive the expenses/vouchers etc. There is useful discussion and resources on making payments to research participants here:

<http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Are-you-paying-participants-or-using-lotteries-or-prize-draws-192>

### What If I Want To Withdraw From The Project?

Explain *how* and *when* participants may withdraw from the project, and here it is important to be realistic, to specify time-frames around withdrawing, and to clarify the implications of withdrawing at different stages, during ongoing data collection, or after data collection has been completed. Once data has been anonymised and separated from real names, it is very difficult to remove details from a dataset; once an article has been published it is not possible to retract the data.

*Agreeing to participate in this project does not oblige you to remain in the study or to have any further obligations to the research project or team. If at any stage you no longer want to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the project by contacting [name and contact details]. You should note that your data may be used in the production of formal research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, reports) prior to your withdrawal and so you are advised to contact the research team at the earliest opportunity should you wish to withdraw from the study.*

You can withdraw from the project [please specify: up until data analysis begins; for six months after the interview; until the end of the funded project; up until publication; until data are deposited in an archive.]

*If you withdraw from the project all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed and your name removed from all the project files.*

Or

*If you withdraw from the project data collected from you will continue to be used, and we will maintain our records of your original consent, but we will not contact you for any future rounds of data collection.*

Or

*If you withdraw from the project all your identifiable data/audio-recorded interviews will be destroyed, but we will continue to use the anonymised data collected up to your withdrawal, and we will maintain our records of your original consent.*

### How Will My Data Be Looked After during the project?

Explain how data will be stored during and after the project; who will have access to the ‘raw’ data during the project; who will have access to anonymised or non-identifiable data; and how data will be accessed. Explain how your practices in the project will meet legal requirements of General Data Protection Regulation; funder’s requirements; professional bodies; and best practice. For example:

*All your data will be processed and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) along with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). The project will be also be guided by and adhere to the University of Edinburgh’s data protection guidance and regulations, see* [*http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DataProtectionGuidance.htm*](http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DataProtectionGuidance.htm)

*All personal details, including contact details, addresses, phone numbers etc, will be kept strictly confidential within the research team, stored on password-protected and encrypted devices and/or University secure servers, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, and the latest University of Edinburgh data security protocols.*

*Electronic project data will be uploaded as soon as possible to a secure University of Edinburgh server and stored there for the duration of the project, only accessible to the project team.*

*All paper records will be transferred to locked storage at the University of Edinburgh [or other location in the field] as soon as practicable. Your Consent Form will be stored separately from your responses.*

### What will happen to my data after the end of the project?

Please explain:

(i) if data will be destroyed after the end of the project – for further details on how to securely delete data see: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/infosec/how-to-protect/secure-deletion>; for example

*“At the end of the project [or 12 months after the end of funding; or after all publications have been published], all data will be deleted using the latest University of Edinburgh protocol for secure data deletion*”.

(ii) if data will be retained by the PI/research team for possible future (re)use, and stored on the University secure server; or

(iii) if data will be stored securely for a time period (possibly because of funder requirements), in which case please explain how long it might be kept for, and how and where it will be securely stored, and who might have access to it, and when it might finally be deleted; or

(iv) if data will be stored for future research by other researchers or non-researchers/members of the public; and if so how and where it will be stored and how it can be accessed by others (eg on your computer/University OneDrive/library repository/database or archive etc). Some funding bodies make particular stipulations about data sharing, so you should ensure your plans accord with funders, if this is funded research. On the consent form it is useful to separate out consent for using the data for the current project and for deposit/sharing/reuse etc.

### What should I do if I want to take part?

Explain exactly how the participant should 'opt in' for the project, who they should contact and how, if there is any deadline for participating, and how and when they will be contacted.

### What will happen with the results of the research project?

Explain what will happen to the results of the research. Will they be used in a student dissertation or thesis? For what degree? Will they be published? As articles? A book? A policy briefing? In public engagement or knowledge exchange events? In your teaching? How can they obtain a copy of the published research? Will there be a website? A newsletter for research participants? You may not have decided on all of these matters yet, so do try and imagine all the ways you might use the research, so that you have relevant consent in the future. Do explain that they will not be identified in any report/publication unless they have given their consent for this.

*The results of this study will be published in academic articles, books, reports and presentations, including on the project website. We may also use data from this project in teaching. Quotes from your interview may be used in these outputs, and these will be anonymous unless you give permission for your real name to be used in the Consent Form.*

### Who is organising and funding the research?

Explain that you are conducting the research as a student or member of staff in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. You should explain whether you are the sole researcher, or if there is a team, and name the team. If there is an interview or other direct person-to-person contact with the participant, you should explain who will actually carry out the research with them. You should also state the organisation that is funding the research (e.g. Economic and Social Research Council, Nuffield Foundation, Wellcome Trust, etc) if appropriate.

### Who has approved this project?

Once the project has been approved:

*This research project has been approved through the ethical review process in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.*

### Contact for Further Information

You should give the individual a contact point for further information, usually the project PI, or researcher carrying out the research. In the case of student research, they should be advised to contact the student’s supervisor in the first instance.

*If you have any further questions about this project, please contact the lead researcher [insert PI, or researcher name].*

*If you have any concerns about the way in which the project has been conducted, or you wish to make a complaint, you can contact the Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity) in the School of Social and Political Sciences:*

*Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity)*

*School of Social and Political Sciences*

*University of Edinburgh*

*Edinburgh EH8 8LN  
e-mail: ethics-ssps@ed.ac.uk*

*For general information about how the University of Edinburgh looks after research data go to:*

[*https://data-protection.ed.ac.uk/privacy-notice-research*](https://data-protection.ed.ac.uk/privacy-notice-research%20)

*If you have any queries about how the project data is managed, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer, Dr Rena Gertz, at* [*dpo@ed.ac.uk*](mailto:dpo@ed.ac.uk)*. See* [*https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/about/data-protection-officer*](https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/about/data-protection-officer)

### Thank you

*Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.*

### Date

The information sheet should be dated.

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