

Guidance for obtaining consent online

If researchers are planning on obtaining consent from participants online or planning on asking participants to send signed consent forms via electronic means, the following should be considered.

In cases where researchers are seeking consent from users online, participants will need to be provided with an online version of the Plain Language Statement (PLS) followed by an online consent form (both the PLS and consent form can be embedded online). Researchers will be required to provide a separate tick box for each statement/clause that the participant is being asked to consent to/acknowledge. Each statement/clause must be included as an essential field in order to ensure that full informed consent has been obtained. Please see the example below:

<p>I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me) *</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p>I understand I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>I understand the information provided *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p>I have read and understand the arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p>I have read and understand confirmations relating to any other relevant information as indicated in the PLS *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>I understand the information provided in relation to data protection *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p>I consent to participate in this research study *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	

If researchers are planning on obtaining consent remotely and require participants to send hand-signed consent forms by electronic means, the following should be considered.

The signed consent form would be considered personal data. If the researcher is receiving personal data by email the Data Protection Unit (DPU) recommend that researchers advise the participant to password protect the file before attaching and sending. The researcher should not receive this password by email, it should be sent via a different method (for example, verbally via phone). When received, the researcher should save a copy of the email and the attachment to a secure storage location (e.g. a restricted-access folder on the DCU network or DCU Google Drive).

The process of sending and receiving emails should be documented by the researcher in a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), to ensure compliance with accountability and transparency requirements under GDPR, ensuring all members of the research team understand and follow the same process.