APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL BY HSS F-REC

THIS TEMPLATE IS INTENDED FOR USE BY: STAFF, DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND RESEARCH MASTERS STUDENTS UNDERTAKING LOW-RISK RESEARCH.

DCU *Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences* provides approval via the *Faculty Research Ethics Committee (F-REC)* only for projects that are deemed **low-risk**. Details of how to determine research project risk is provided on the F-REC information website and projects that do not fit these criteria must be submitted for review to the University-level Research Ethics Committee.

This form is divided into thematic sections, some of which may not apply to your proposed research. Where indicated, some sections or subsections can be left blank.

Applicants with proposed research involving Personal Data, which is subject to GDPR, should carefully review §4 and §5, which helps you to assess whether legal requirements for data protection are met.

Applications using this form must be submitted electronically. **The completed application must consist of a single PDF documen**t, incorporating all relevant and clearly labelled appendices (see: §8).  
**The completed application should be submitted here**: <https://forms.gle/c5QVH93kJFjhkXeo9>

Doctoral or Research Masters students using this form must list their supervisor(s) as a co-investigator on this form, and when uploading the completed application at the F-REC portal. Supervisors must read the completed form and approve it via electronic signature before its submission.

**RESEARCH MUST NOT COMMENCE UNTIL WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL BY THE FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE HAS BEEN RECEIVED.**

# 1. Key Project Details

## 1.1 **PROJECT TITLE**

## 1.2 **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**(S)

The Principal Investigator (PI) is a person with principal responsibility for the research project. The **name**, **email** **address**, and **Faculty School** of the PI should be provided here. Projects having shared research direction should list the name and email address of the Co-PIs. In the case of postgraduate research projects (doctoral research projects, masters by research), the *supervisor(s) and student* should be listed as PIs.

Name(s):

Email address(es):

Faculty School(s)/Other Affiliation:

## 1.3 **OTHER INVESTIGATOR**(S)

This section should be used to identify the name, email address, and affiliation of any other research investigators on the project. In subsequent sections of this application, clear reference should be made to any investigators identified here who will have responsibility for carrying out components of the research described. **This section may be left blank where relevant.**

Name(s):

Email address(es):

Faculty School(s)/Other Affiliation:

## 1.4 **PROPOSED RESEARCH SCHEDULE**

Indicate the **proposed start date and anticipated end date** for the project research component(s) that involve human participants. For projects with multiple phases of research, indicate the total anticipated running time of all proposed research elements with human participants.

## 1.5 **OTHER SUBMISSIONS FOR REVIEW**

Indicate using **YES** or **NO** whether the following apply:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| This research proposal **requires other approvals**. (E.g. Ethical approvals from other institutions, approval for access to locations or groups, etc.) |  |
| This research proposal has been **submitted to another Research Ethics Committee** |  |
| This research proposal has been **previously refused ethical approval** |  |

**If you answered YES to any of the above**, please provide details here. List any other approvals required and the status of those applications. For cases where the research proposal was previously refused, provide detail of the outcome and of any alterations made in response. Related documentation may be included as a clearly labelled appendix to this application, if necessary.

## 1.6 **KNOWLEDGE OF RESEARCH ETHICS**

Both within the Comprehensive and the Concise online Research Integrity Training Programmes available on Loop, Module 9 covers research involving human participants.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I / We have successfully completed a research ethics training/course/module or equivalent. |  |

# 2. Describing the Proposed Research

## 2.1 **PLAIN LANGUAGE DESCRIPTION**

In this section, provide a concise outline of what is proposed in your research project. Indicate the main aims / goals of your project, its context or setting, its significance, and its human participants (if any). Use everyday language and provide additional definition for any technical terms required. Where in-text references are used, a bibliography should be included as an appendix to this application. **This summary should not exceed 300 words.**

## 2.2 **SUMMARY OF METHODS**

Briefly outline the proposed methodologies of research in your project. **List each component of investigation**, indicating the form/mode *(e.g. online questionnaires, in-person interviewing, task observation, etc.)*, its purpose in the project, and the type(s) of data collected.

## 2.3 **SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

For the methodological components outlined above, indicate which of the project’s investigators is responsible for that research. Where research components will be undertaken by investigators other than the PI(s), briefly indicate the person’s relevant qualifications and competencies to carry out this research.

## 2.4 **RISK TO INVESTIGATORS**

For the methodological components outlined above, provide details of any anticipated risk(s) to the principal or other investigators, and any related proposals to mitigate or address this.

**For projects assessed to pose no risk to the investigators, state *NO RISK* below.**

## 2.5 **RESEARCH DISSEMINATION**

Briefly indicate how you intend to disseminate the results/outputs of this proposed research. In line with encouraging institutional *Open Research* practices, please note that the use of open access publishing is recommended. Further information at: <https://www.dcu.ie/library/open-research-open-access>

## 2.6 **USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)**

Where Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Generative AI (GenAI) tools are used in the process of your research, indicate the *name* and *use* of these tools. Include AI/GenAI tools that will be used at any stage of preparing, recruiting, gathering data, processing data, analysing, summarising, writing, or disseminating your research. See the ‘DCU Guidance on the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Research’ section, available on the University Research Ethics webpage (https://www.dcu.ie/researchsupport/research-ethics). If you do not intend to use AI, you can leave this subsection blank.

# 3. Human Participants

### Section 3 describes human participants in the proposed research. **If your proposed project does not involve human participants, you should skip this section.**

## 3.1 **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

For *each group* of participants in the proposed research, provide a succinct description of the sample size, demographic details, and source of those participants. Label the group(s) and indicate which of the research methodologies outlined in §2.2 they will be involved in. If some/all of your participants are minors, you will provide additional detail on these in §4. **This subsection should provide a succinct summary that allows reviewers to easily understand the profile of all participants in all phases of your research.**

## 3.2 **PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT**

For *each group* of participants, briefly describe how these participants will be recruited. State the criteria for their selection and mention how they will be contacted. Where an advertisement or circular is being used to recruit potential participants, provide this as a clearly labelled appendix to this application. Where proposing to contact individuals by phone or email, indicate how their contact details are obtained and whether these are stored.

## 3.3 **RISK TO PARTICIPANTS**

**Identify the potential risks to participants in this project.** These may include physical, social, psychological, legal, and economic risks. Participation in research that involves any deception, addresses criminality or illegal activity, or might cause embarrassment, regret, or depression, should be described in detail. **Measures to mitigate or minimise risk to participants should also be described here.**

## 3.4 **BENEFIT TO PARTICIPANTS**

Identify any direct or indirect benefit(s) to participants in this research. **Where there are none, state *NONE* below.**

## 3.5 **INCENTIVISATION TO PARTICIPATE**

Identify any payments or other incentives proposed for participation. **Where there are none, state *NONE* below.**

## 3.6 **INFORMING PARTICIPANTS OF RESULTS**

How will participants be informed about the results/outputs of this research?

# 4. Personal Data & GDPR Requirements

### Section 4 describes how *Personal Data* is handled in the proposed research.

## 4.1 **KNOWLEDGE OF DATA PROTECTION**

DCU provides access for all researchers to a Data Protection module on Loop, which includes information on Personal Data and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Investigators should complete all essential e-learning components identified for researchers by DCU REC, and should familiarise themselves with concepts of GDPR and Personal Data.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I / We have completed the relevant Data Protection staff e-learning components |  |

## 4.2 **USE OF PERSONAL DATA**

Personal Data is *any information about a living person*, where that person is either identified or could be identified, from the data itself (or when it is combined). **The collection or processing of Personal Data within a project must be compliant with the legal requirements of GDPR.**

Typical examples of personal data in a low-risk research context include: Physical records – e.g. participant files, printed surveys, consent declarations, interview notes, etc., or Electronic records – e.g. database of participant details, online survey returns, photos, audio & visual recordings, IP addresses, etc.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The proposed research involves **collection or processing of Personal Data.** |  |

*Researchers are advised to anonymise potentially identifiable data as soon as possible in the research process. Where relevant, researchers are advised to ensure participants are advised not to include any personally identifying information in any free-text space/s in anonymous questionnaires/surveys.*

## 4.3 **PROTECTING PARTICIPANT IDENTITIES**

It is expected that measures should be in place in most projects to protect the identity of contributing human participants, except where there is a clear rationale for them to be identified.

**If you ARE NOT taking actions to protect participant identities, provide a rationale here. Otherwise, you can leave this section blank.**

## 4.4 **PROCESSES TO PSEUDONYMISE PERSONAL DATA**

**Pseudonymisation** processes are ones that alter data so that it can no longer be attributed to a specific living person without the use of additional information in combination, which is separately and securely maintained. Examples include renaming participants with pseudonyms like “Person 1”, etc., and keeping a list of these.  
Such processes are a common measure to protect participant identities but are not the same as full anonymity and, as such, GDPR requirements still apply to the resulting data.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The proposed research involves **Pseudonymisation of Personal Data.** |  |

**If you answered YES,** provide details of the processes intended to provide pseudonyms or disguise identities.

## 4.5 **PROCESSES TO ANONYMISE PERSONAL DATA**

**Anonymisation** of Personal Data involves processes to fully and *irreversibly* remove direct and indirect identifying information, so the data can never be re-associated with the participants it came from. This process is not the same as substituting pseudonyms (see previous section) and only applies where Personal Data is rendered completely anonymous via your actions, even to you. Note that some types of rich qualitative data (e.g. interview transcripts) may never be possible to fully anonymise.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The proposed research involves **Anonymisation of Personal Data.** |  |

**If you answered YES,** provide details of the Anonymisation processes involved.

## 4.6 **LEGAL LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY**

Even where efforts are made by you as a researcher to limit how participants might be identified, situations exist where you may be compelled to do so, and participants should be informed of this – usually in the Participant Information Sheet (e.g. Data may be subject to subpoena, legal claims for access, or mandated reporting in some professions).

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Participants will be made aware that there are legal limits to confidentiality. |  |

## 4.7 **CHECKLIST: SPECIAL CATEGORY DATA**

GDPR (Article 9) provides for certain “special categories” of Personal Data which should be afforded increased protections. **Indicate any that apply in the case of your proposed project:**

Indicate using **YES** or **NO** beside each of the categories below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Racial or Ethnic Origin |
|  | Political opinions |
|  | Religious or philosophical beliefs |
|  | Trade union membership |
|  | Genetic data, Biometric data, or Data concerning health |
|  | Data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation |

**Proposed research that involves the collection or processing of Personal Data in any of the above categories should be discussed with DCU Data Protection Unit PRIOR to submitting your application for approval.** Note that research related to these categories can still be deemed low-risk and approved by HSS F-REC, in some cases, but additional protections are required and the DCU Data Protection Unit should be consulted before proceeding. Where your use of data in the categories above creates a higher risk, approval must be sought from the University REC.

## 4.8 **CHECKLIST: AREAS OF ADDITIONAL CONCERN**

The GDPR outlines several areas of additional concern for data collection and processing.   
**Indicate any that apply in the case of your proposed project:**

Indicate using **YES** or **NO** beside each of the categories below:

|  | The proposed research involves Personal Data related to **minors**. (A minor is any person under 18 years of age). |
| --- | --- |
|  | The proposed research involves Personal Data related to **vulnerable** **individuals**. (A vulnerable individual may be anyone who is unable to consent to, or to oppose, the processing of his or her data for any reason, including disability.) |
|  | The proposed research involves the use of data relating to an individual’s **criminal convictions and / or offences**. |
|  | The proposed research involves **large-scale processing** of Personal Data. (This can include Personal Data for a large number of individuals, or where the processing is extensive and has long-lasting effects). |
|  | The proposed research involves the sharing or transferring of Personal Data to a **third party**, outside of DCU. (Common examples include research partner institutions, translation or transcription services, etc.) |
|  | The proposed research involves the sharing or processing of Personal Data **outside of the EU/EEA** (Outside any EU member state, Norway, Lichtenstein, or Iceland.) |
|  | The proposed research will involve the **matching or combining of separate datasets** of information on individuals in a way that would exceed their reasonable expectations of privacy. |

**Proposed research that involves any of the above criteria should be discussed with the DCU Data Protection Unit PRIOR to submitting your application for approval.** Note that research related to these categories can still be deemed low-risk and approved by HSS F-REC, in some cases, but their advice must be sought and followed.

## 4.9 **STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH GDPR**

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To the best of my/our knowledge, this project is fully compliant with GDPR requirements for any specific uses of Personal Data outlined in the research plan. |  |

Further information on data protection is always available from DCU’s Data Protection Unit. Your School’s *Research Convenor* may also assist in directing you to relevant information on Personal Data and GDPR.

**If you contacted the DCU Data Protection Unit to seek advice on compliance with GDPR and handling of data, you should include their recommendations in an appendix.**

# 5. Data Storage & Security

### Section 5 applies to all data collected and processed in your project, whether or not it is Personal Data. **This section should always be completed.**

## 5.1 **STORING DATA**

DCU recommends that electronic data storage should use an appropriately secured *DCU Google Drive* folder. Describe how data is to be electronically stored for your proposed project. If using any alternatives to the recommended platform, indicate how these meet the requirements for data protection and GDPR.  
If data is being physically stored or collated (e.g. printed forms, signed sheets), how are these stored?

## 5.2 **RETAINING DATA**

Indicate how long project data will be held by you, differentiating between datasets / categories in the project which have separate schedules, if necessary. **Note that with very few exceptions, *Personal Data* may not be held indefinitely.** See DCU Data Retention Policy.

## 5.3 **SHARING OR ARCHIVING DATA**

In some projects, anonymised datasets may be made available to other researchers – usually via publication in repositories or archives. In line with encouraging institutional Open Research practices, please note that the use of trusted data repositories or archives is recommended. See: https://www.dcu.ie/library/open-research-fair-data  
If your intention is to share or archive project data in this way, clearly indicate *what* dataset(s) are involved, *how* they will be prepared, and *where* they will be published. If this does not apply, leave this section blank.

## 5.4 **SCHEDULED DELETION / DISPOSAL OF DATA**

Briefly describe the policy for deletion of data corresponding to the schedule(s) for retaining data by category above. In each case, indicate **how, when, and by whom** the data will be deleted or disposed of.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anticipated date of deletion: (e.g. 1st September 2028) |  |
| Person(s) responsible: |  |

## 5.5 **OTHER ACCESS TO DATA**

Indicate any other persons, organisations, or institutions who will have access to the data in your proposed project during the period of research, other than the investigators listed in §1. In each case, state who will have access to what data, and what the purpose of this access is for the research. **If no one other than the main researchers will have access to the project data, you can leave this subsection blank.**

# 6. Funding & Interests

## 6.1 **PROJECT FUNDING**

Indicate how the proposed research is funded. If funded by one or more grants, provide the grant number(s) if known. Participants should be informed of sources of funding via Participant Information Sheet(s), etc.

## 6.2 **FUNDER CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

A potential conflict of interest may arise where the funders of the research have a personal, financial, political, ideological, or commercial interest in its outcome that might compromise the independence or integrity of the research, bias conduct or reporting, or delay or affect publication. See DCU Conflict of Interest Policy.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I / We are aware of a **potential conflict of interest related to funding** in the proposed research |  |

**If you answered YES,** provide details of the potential conflict and all steps taken to mitigate or minimise this.

## 6.3 **PARTICIPANT CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Other potential conflicts of interest may occur where participants in a project experience perceived coercion to be involved, due to their relationship to the researchers, or to power dynamics, or where other aspects of the project design may prompt participants to act against their own interest.

Indicate using **YES** or **NO**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I / We are aware of a **potential conflict of interest related to participants** in the proposed research |  |

**If you answered YES,** provide details of the potential conflict and all steps taken to mitigate or minimise this.

# 7. Declaration by the Principal Investigator

The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University’s current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in this application in accordance with the form guidelines, the F-REC and University guidelines, relevant policies, and any other conditions laid down by the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

I have declared any potential or actual conflicts of interest in the proposed research, in accordance with the University’s policy.

I (and any co-investigators and/or supporting staff) have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in this application, and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.

I agree that:

1. Any amendments to this proposal must receive prior F-REC approval.[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. As a condition of approval, investigators are required to document and report immediately to the F-REC any adverse events, any issues which might negatively impact on the conduct of the research, and/or any complaint from a participant relating to their participation in the study.

## 7.1 **ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE: *PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR***

**Print the name** of the signing PI below, include the **date** and provide an **electronic signature** for this person.

Print name(s):

Electronic signature(s):

Date(s):

## 7.2 **ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE: *SUPERVISOR***

In the case of proposed doctoral research, projects for masters by research, or other research with an allocated supervisor, print the name of the supervisor below, and include the date and provide an electronic signature for this person. The signing supervisor declares that they have read and approved this submission.   
**For non-supervised research, this subsection is left blank.**

Print name(s):

Electronic signature(s):

Date(s):

# 8. Checklist of Appendices

Required appendices to this application are enumerated below. These checklists should be used to ensure that all required information and documents are part of this application, as it cannot be approved without these.

**All appendices must be clearly labelled and included with this form, which is submitted as a single PDF document. Applications with multiple documents or dispersed components are not eligible for review by F-REC.**

# Mandatory Appendices related to Human Participants

Any proposed research project involving human participants is expected to include the following three categories of document for review.

**If your application does not provide one or more of the expected appendices below,** for a proposed project with human participants, provide a justification here for each case where these documents are not used or not provided.

## Required Appendix 1: **Participant Information Sheet(s)**

You must draft a concise statement in clear and accessible language that unambiguously describes, for potential participants in your project, the context of the research and their role within it. The format and content of the Participant Information Sheet may vary in response to the potential participant audience, but there are clear guidelines supplied for the information it must include. See the checklist below.

You can (and should) provide more than one Participant Information Sheet, if you have multiple differing points of participation (e.g. Focus Group and Interview). This is especially important if you have participating minors, where a separate Participant Information Sheet should be provided for parents and for children, with suitable language levels.

**Use this checklist to verify that your Participant Information Sheet(s) comply with good research practice, by addressing:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Introductory Information (PI and researcher names, Faculty school, title of the research). |
|  | What this research is about. |
|  | Why this research is being conducted. |
|  | What the participant is expected to do/have to do if they decide to participate. |
|  | How their privacy will be protected. |
|  | Details relating to GDPR Compliance, where Personal Data is being sought. |
|  | How data will be used and subsequently disposed of. |
|  | The legal limitations to data confidentiality. |
|  | Any benefits of taking part in the research. |
|  | Any risks of taking part in the research. |
|  | Confirmation that participants can change their mind at any stage and withdraw. |
|  | How participants can find out what happens with the project. |
|  | Contact details for further information (including F-REC and DCU Data Protection Unit) |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

## Required Appendix 2: **Recording Informed Consent**

You must draft a specific document that appropriately records the informed consent of participants, and which should make reference to the Participant Information Sheet above. Guidelines are provided for what this document must contain, but note that its form may vary in different contexts (e.g. as a preamble to an online survey, versus as signed document in an in-person interview). You should include corresponding documents for any varying contexts.

The University REC has templates for different types of consent forms, which are available on its webpage, e.g. ‘Anonymous Informed Consent Form for Online Surveys’.

**Informed Consent Form – Template**

**Research Study Title**

Also state the name of the School/Centre involved, the principal investigator and any other investigators.

**Clarification of the purpose of the research**

If personal data is being collected and processed, please ensure that the participants acknowledge the identity of the data controller (e.g. DCU) and the purposes of the processing for which the personal data are intended.

**Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Participant Information Sheet**

Requirements may include involvement in interviews, completion of a questionnaire, audio recordings, etc.

*E.g.*

*Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)*

*I have read the Participant Information Sheet (or had it read to me) Yes/No*

*I understand the information provided Yes/No*

*I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study Yes/No*

*I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions Yes/No*

*I am aware that my interview will be audio recorded* *Yes/No*

**Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

E.g. I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

**Confirmation of arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

**Confirmation of arrangements regarding archiving/destruction of data**

**Confirmations relating to any other relevant information as indicated in the Participant Information Sheet**

**Signature:**

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

## Required Appendix 3: **Question Guide(s)**

For each method of inquiry outlined in 2.2, which involve human participants, (e.g. questionnaires, interviews), provide a Question Guide. This should consist of either a completed design for all questions that will be posed (e.g. a draft questionnaire), or a detailed thematic descriptor of the areas of inquiry (e.g. an interview guide indicating the themes and order of proposed questioning).

Note that in circumstances where a segment of research will contain questions which cannot yet be determined (e.g. a secondary interview phase that derives or refines questions from an earlier phase of inquiry), applicants should still provide a descriptor of the predicted themes of questioning, or offer explanation on how and on what topics that questioning will emerge.

As indicated in the terms of the signed declaration (§9), later amendments to the project require the review and approval of F-REC. Where approved questions change, or where approved thematic descriptors no longer sufficiently describe the amended research design, applicants must contact F-REC and seek an updated approval.

# 9. Other Situational Appendices

Depending on the nature of your proposed project, and your answers to earlier sections, one or more of the following appendices may be expected with your application.

**If an appendix described below is expected based on your earlier answers but is not included**, provide a justification here for each case where these documents are not used or not provided.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Bibliography**, where in-text citations are used in the application. |
|  | **Recruitment Advertisement(s)**, where used for participant recruitment. |
|  | **Evidence of required external approvals**, where relevant. |
|  | **Documents related to previous Research Ethics review or refusals**, where relevant. |

1. Requests for review of later amendments to an approved application should be made here: <https://forms.gle/MfTf3p5cVDmRBK298> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)