A picture containing background pattern

Description automatically generated

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**This template can be adapted for your own project in an electronic or online format, or you can develop your own approach to delivering participant information. Be aware, however, that if an improvised Participant Information (PI) Sheet does not cover at least the core of the issues suggested below, ethics reviewers may well ask for significant amendments. Therefore, even if you do not use this template directly, reviewing the sections below may help you clarify appropriate practice for your own project.**

**The text of your PI Sheet must be fully accessible for your specific participants, i.e., it must use language that will be unambiguous to that group and avoid unexplained jargon/acronyms. All participant-facing materials should have a clear, consistent and accessible layout (e.g. a sans serif font such as Calibri or Century Gothic and line-spacing set to at least 1.5), and should generally include a** [University of Cumbria logo](https://unicumbriaac.sharepoint.com/sites/SR/SitePages/Branded-Templates-%26-Content.aspx)**, and other collaborator/funder logos where relevant. They should also be comprehensively checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar, as they will be available in the public domain and thereby hold reputational significance for all involved agencies.**

**Please note that in online surveys, the Participant Information and Consent Questions should typically be embedded in the survey itself, and not sent/requested ahead of the survey by email or post. The former practice maximises participant identity protection, minimises wasted time and also helps reduce the work’s carbon footprint.**

**If you are using this template, be sure to remove or reformat all purple (instructional) text- including this header block - and any green (example) text, before finalising your PI Sheet and submitting your application for ethical review.**

**PROJECT TITLE:** The title should be simple and self-explanatory to your participant group, and should appear (in the same form) on all project documentation. In the title, all acronyms need to be written out in full, even where they will likely be familiar to participants.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?**

The background and the aim of the project should be given here. Include a sense of for how long the project will run and a brief outline of the overall design of the project. Be particularly careful to use participant-friendly language here, and to avoid technical jargon unless the participants themselves will be familiar with it. If you know with any certainty, you might also include a note of how many other people will be asked to participate.

**WHY HAVE YOU ASKED ME TO TAKE PART?**

Explain how the project is recruiting participants or how the individual was chosen to take part, detailing all key inclusion criteria. This should align clearly with the previous section, so that it is easy for a participant to understand why they ‘fit the bill’.

For example: You have been invited to participate in this study because you have identified you are a [X] qualified to at least BSc level, with a minimum of five years of experience working in [Y] since you graduated from your degree, and direct experience of managing [Z].

**WHAT WOULD 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.

For example: You will be asked a number of questions regarding [describe research topic and the kind of data you require]. The activity/interview/focus group etc. will take place [in a location / online, and at a time that it is convenient for you, and should last approximately [duration], though you will not be actively cut-off if you feel you have more to contribute. The activity/interview/focus group etc. will be audio-recorded / video-recorded / measured using [detail instruments / equipment].

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?**

Explain that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary, and that participants can withdraw at any time before, during (and where offered) after they contribute without needing to provide a reason. If you are offering the option of *post-hoc* withdrawal, it is essential that a timeframe is also included (usually one or two weeks after the participant’s contribution is complete) and to note that methods for withdrawing are discussed below.

If the research is linked to a service that participants are receiving, be certain to reassure them that the service or care they receive will not be affected. Similarly, if they are students, reassure them that 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 are still free to withdraw all or any part of your contribution at any time before, during or up to a week after you make your contribution. You can do this without giving a reason and without any impact on any services you are using.

**WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT PARTICIPATING DURING THE STUDY?**

Reiterate *when* and *how* participants may withdraw from the project, and here it is important to be realistic, to specify timeframes 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 have been redacted 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. Also, for studies using participants in groups, post-hoc retraction of one or more contributions can render the wider dataset ambiguous or even meaningless. Finally, the mechanism for withdrawal must be made unambiguous, and should be attentive to the confidentiality implications of the project itself. Do not, for example, mandate that withdrawal requests from an anonymous online survey be submitted to the researchers by email; this effectively makes breaking anonymity an active condition of withdrawal.

For example: 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. You can withdraw from the study at any time before or during making your contribution, plus [specify timeframe: up until data analysis begins; for two weeks after the interview; until the end of the funded project; up until publication; until data are deposited in an archive.] If you wish to withdraw, you should [specify mechanism: email / complete withdrawal survey etc.]

If you withdraw from the study, all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed in line with your wishes, and your name removed from all study-related files.

**WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?**

Explain that you are conducting the research as a postgraduate research student or member of staff at the University of Cumbria. 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 if appropriate.

**WHAT HAPPENS TO MY DATA DURING THE PROJECT?**

Explain how raw (i.e., unredacted) data will be stored during the project on OneDrive, avoiding the use of mobile storage devices such as external hard drives and thumb drives, and when it will be deleted. Detail who will have access to the raw data at this point and at any time in the future (including stakeholders, funders etc.). Explain (in lay terms) how your storage practices in the project will meet legal requirements of General Data Protection Regulation; funder’s requirements; professional bodies; and best practice. Be particularly explicit about the level and specifics of data redaction/anonymisation that will be applied. Do not propose or imply that qualitative data will be ‘anonymous’ or ‘anonymised’, particularly not if you are intending to use direct quotes in any of your outputs. With even redacted quotations, there is a small chance that someone already familiar with a participant may recognise them from their words. This chance increases significantly with the use of focus groups, and ‘closed cohort’ studies such as those of a workplace or student group. Finally, and to the same ends, be careful to specify if any redacted/anonymous data may be made available either directly through plans to share datasets, or indirectly through any open datasets made public through the project.

For example: Only the project team and a trusted transcriber, signed-up to the full ethical conditions of the project, will see/hear the raw data you provide; these [sound/video] files will not be made available at any time to other individuals or agencies. All your personal details, including names, email addresses etc., will be kept strictly within the research team. When the media files are transcribed, all names, places and exact dates will be removed (redacted).

All raw and redacted project materials will be stored on the University of Cumbria’s secure, Multi-Factor Authenticated (MFA) OneDrive, 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 Cumbria’s data protection guidance, see: <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/about/organisation/professional-services/vice-chancellors-office/data-protection/>. While no raw data will be available to anyone outside of the research team, direct quotations will be used in all outputs from the work and, although redacted, there may be a small chance that someone already familiar with you may recognise you from their content. Redacted transcripts may - in line with some publishers’ requirements - also be uploaded in part or in full to an academic data repository.

It is expected that the raw data will be securely deleted as soon as transcription is complete, and by no later than [date]. All redacted data will securely be deleted by [date].

**ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE RISKS IN TAKING PART? (WHERE RELEVANT)**

Describe any risks 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. These might include having a friend or family member attend an interview with a participant to provide support, the guarantee of a qualified first aider being in attendance at any research activity involving physical exertion, additional reassurance about spontaneous right of withdrawal and so forth.

For example: The only cost to you here would be in the form of your time. There are no significant risks anticipated from your participation in this research project, though it is possible that you may find some of the topics for discussion upsetting. If you anticipate anything being tough for you to discuss, you are encouraged to have a friend or family member with you during the interview for support. If you feel that you need a break during your interview, you need only ask for one. If you need to terminate the interview completely, just say so and you’ll need to provide no further reason.

It is difficult to determine all potential risks at the outset of a piece of research, but some potential risks are…”

**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 or sharing experiences with peers (when using such methods as focus groups). 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. For example:

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 OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES AND/OR INCONVENIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?** 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.

**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 final 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.

Remember that you cannot use the collected data for any purpose of which the participants have not been informed here, at least not without going back to all of them and seeking further consent. In some studies, not least anonymous online surveys, this will simply not be possible, and therefore any statement you make here will be definitive.

For example: The results of this study will be firstly published as a formal report for the funders (see above), which will be available on the project website (link). It is then expected that they will be presented at national/international conferences and written-up as articles for peer-reviewed academic journals. We may also use evidence from this study for teaching purposes.

You will be sent a one-page summary of the findings as soon as the project is complete, and notified of when any public outputs become available, including those stored in the University of Cumbria’s institutional repository, [InSIght](https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/).

**WHO HAS APPROVED THIS PROJECT?**

Once the project has been approved, update this section to clearly state your approval reference number.

This research project has been approved through the institutional Ethics Panel at the University of Cumbria, REF: XXXXX.

**SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

This can be deleted if not relevant.

If you tell a member of the project team about something which indicates a risk of serious harm to yourself or other person(s), we may not be able to keep this confidential and will discuss with you what steps we will take.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

This can be deleted/adapted according to the project.

This research has been designed and will be conducted so as to cause minimal negative environmental impact.

**HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TAKING PART?**

Explain exactly who should be contacted and how, if there is any deadline for making such contact. Where the study will otherwise be authentically anonymous, i.e. a mass survey, either find a way of allowing prospective participants to contact you anonymously (e.g. an online notice board), or make it explicit that by emailing the researcher/team directly, they will be breaking anonymity.

**PRIVACY NOTICE**

This Privacy Notice explains how we process the personal data of individuals who agree to take part in research carried out by the University of Cumbria. This notice is intended for Research Participants. [https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/about/organisation/professional-services/vice-chancellors-office/data-protection/research-participants-privacy-notice/](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cumbria.ac.uk%2Fabout%2Forganisation%2Fprofessional-services%2Fvice-chancellors-office%2Fdata-protection%2Fresearch-participants-privacy-notice%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cresearch.office%40cumbria.ac.uk%7Cab7d81962cd54804e3ce08dc73652340%7Cb627db1d99584fd18ea48ac3b27cf00f%7C1%7C0%7C638512125418431818%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=yiE9VxBuw3PdOs%2Fotg74LFULNe1xltNYR%2BfRdvKTrq4%3D&reserved=0)

**WHAT IF I WANT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

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 Chair of the Research Ethics Panel, Associate Professor Paul K. Miller, via the Research Office at [research.office@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:research.office@cumbria.ac.uk)

**THANK YOU**

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

**DATE**

This Participant Information was last updated on: XX/XX/XXXX

**PI SHEET GUIDANCE / TEMPLATE**

Last reviewed June 2024