MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  

Guidelines on Preparing Information/Consent Forms

ONLY MAQUARIE UNIVERSITY FACULTY OR DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR SUBMISSION TO HREC  
(letterhead available from your respective Department Head/Faculty)

Guidelines

The purpose of an information and consent form is to ensure that potential participants in research are able to make an informed choice as to whether or not to participate. This is generally accomplished by providing individuals with a written statement describing the aims and procedures of the research, their rights as participants, and any risks or discomforts involved. Written evidence of an individual's consent to participate is usually required. Below is a list of general features and specific information required for most information and consent forms. A checklist format is used to help investigators make sure all relevant topics are covered. An information and consent form must accompany your application for ethics clearance.

General Features:

(1) A separate information and consent form should be prepared for:

(a) Each participant involved (and/or her or his guardian);

(b) The participant's institution (if any). This applies where access to potential participants is controlled by an institution such as a hospital, school, etc.

(c) Other involved professional workers (where applicable).

(2) The form should be written in plain English, including the Australian spelling of words—in Microsoft Word, set the proofing language to 'English (Australia)'. If the research is to be conducted in a country other than Australia, an information and consent form should be prepared in the appropriate language and an English translation of the consent form should be prepared. Both documents should be provided to the Committee for review.

(3) The form should be written in a friendly rather than formal manner.

(4) The form, signed by the participant and investigator, should be printed on Macquarie University letterhead (or that of an alternative organisation, if applicable).
(5) The participant and the investigator should sign and date **two copies** of the information and consent form. One copy should be kept by the investigator, the other by the participant. Each copy should be clearly identified as belonging to the participant or to the investigator.

**Specific Information and Consent Statements:**

A information and consent form must accompany your application for ethics clearance. The form should include the following information:

(1) A short title for the project in words the participant will understand.

(2) A brief explanation of the aims of the research.

(3) The names of the investigators, their Department/Faculty affiliations, contact telephone numbers and email addresses. No home phone numbers should be used. If a work phone number is not available for a student researcher, then the Macquarie University phone number for the student’s supervisor should be used.

(a) If the project is essentially a research student's project, it should be identified as “being conducted to meet the requirements for the degree of (name of degree) under the supervision of (supervisor's name, contact telephone number and email address) of the Department of (supervisor's Department of affiliation).” **NB: For student research, the student’s primary supervisor must be nominated as the Chief Investigator on the application.**

(4) An explanation of what each participant will be expected to do as a participant in the research. The explanation should include:

(a) A description of the tasks or procedures, their frequency, and the information to be obtained, e.g. complete questionnaires about leisure activities and social relationships at the beginning of the research and twelve months later, do a computer task assessing memory for words, etc.

(b) The amount of time required.

(c) Other requirements (if any), e.g. wearing special clothing, abstaining from a meal, etc.

(5) An acknowledgment of any recording using audio-recordings, video-recordings, or photographs. Acknowledge future plans for the storage of any recording including who will have access to the recording. If the recording will form part of an archive for later use by other researchers this should be acknowledged.

(6) An objective statement of any risks or discomforts.

(a) If it is possible that follow-up support (e.g. counselling) may be required
by some participants, investigators should make arrangements in advance for
the provision of these services, and the information and consent form
should note their availability and how contact can be made.

(7) Any payment of money or other remuneration (e.g. course credits) for
participation in the study.

(a) Macquarie University students who are participating in research as part of
their course requirements must be assured that if they choose to withdraw
from the study, they will still receive their course research credits.

(8) Information about how confidentiality of the data will be maintained. The topics
of privacy, access to the data, and publication should be discussed.

(a) **Privacy:** The form should include a statement that any information or
personal details gathered in the course of the research are confidential,
except as required by law.

(b) **Access:** Typically, access to data is limited to those persons directly
involved in the research, and this should be acknowledged in the form. If
other investigators may gain access to the data, this also should be
acknowledged in the form. Access should be strictly monitored by the
original investigator, and no information identifying participants should
be released without the explicit consent of the participants concerned.

(c) **Publication:** The possibility of publication of the results should be
acknowledged, and there should be an assurance that publications will not
include any information identifying individual participants.

(9) A statement guaranteeing participants the right to withdraw from further
participation in the research at any time, without having to give a reason and
without consequences.

(a) If the participant is in a dependent relationship to the investigator (e.g. a
patient, student, or dependent) or to an institution directly or indirectly
involved in the research, then it is important to emphasise that any refusal
to participate or withdrawal from the research will not prejudice the
participant's future care, employment, or academic progress in any way.

(b) An exception is where research data is collected completely anonymously.
Participants cannot be guaranteed the right to withdraw "at any time"
because the data, once submitted, cannot be identified with specific
individuals. The most common case is with anonymous questionnaires.

(10) A signed statement of agreement to participate in the research which should
take the following form:

I (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and
understand the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: ________________________ (block letters)

Participant's Signature: ___________________ Date:

Investigator's Name: ________________________ (block letters)

Investigator's Signature: ___________________ Date:

(a) In certain limited cases the requirement to obtain signed statements of agreement to participate is deemed not to apply. These include, for example, mass distribution questionnaires where no information which could identify participants is collected, procedures which may be part of the normal routine (e.g. school assessments), research where direct contact with participants does not occur (e.g. telephone surveys), and research where potential subjects are unlikely to agree to participate if any identifying information is collected (e.g. drug use, HIV/AIDS). In these cases, however, it is still necessary to provide potential participants with either written or verbal information about the research and their rights as participants, and to obtain verbal consent, if possible.

In the case of anonymous questionnaires, participants should be provided with an information letter that contains all of the information that would be have been in a consent form with the signature part omitted. On the questionnaire and on the information letter, these participants should be specifically informed that "return of the questionnaire will be regarded as consent to use the information for research purposes".

(11) A footnote regarding complaint procedures as follows:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If the research is taking place in a country other than Australia the Committee recommends that you also include the contact details for a local independent contact person, to make it easier for participants should they wish to confirm your identity or express any concerns. You will need to ensure that the local contact person is aware that they must notify / copy the Committee with any complaints/documents relating to complaints that are received.
Chief Investigator’s / Supervisor’s Name & Title: ________________________________

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: ________________________________

You are invited to participate in a study of (state what is being studied). The purpose of the study is (state what the study is designed to discover or establish. Please provide sufficient detail so that potential participants can make an informed decision about participation).

The study is being conducted by (provide the names of the Chief Investigators, their Department affiliations, contact telephone numbers and email addresses). (If the research is a research student’s project it should be identified) as being conducted to meet the requirements of (name of degree) under the supervision of (supervisor’s name, contact telephone number and email address) of the Department of (supervisor’s Department of affiliation).

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to (describe the tasks or procedures, their frequency and duration, and the information to be obtained). (Acknowledge any recording using audio-recordings, video-recordings, or photographs.) (Describe any risks or discomforts.) (Describe any payment of money or other remuneration).

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. (Acknowledge who will have access to the data.) A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request (include how can be made available to participants.) (State any intention for the data to be made available for use in future Human Research Ethics Committee-approved projects).

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.
I, (participant's name) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: __________________________________________
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: __________________________  Date:__________

Investigator's Name: __________________________________________
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: __________________________  Date:__________

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)