**TEMPLATE FOR PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

**NOTE that this is not a fixed template but a guidance document that should be adapted to meet the needs of your study. Depending on the type of study you are planning and what is involved you will need to determine which of the suggested headings below are appropriate to use. However, also note that these headings are often useful when producing the participant information as the aim of the guidance is to provide sufficient information to support potential participants in making the decision as to whether or not they wish to take part in your study. There may be headings not suggested below that are relevant to your study.**

The headings and text in black below are mandatory for all studies.

The headings and text in red is for guidance/suggestion and can be tailored to the specifics of your study. You can find further help and guidance on the research ethics webpages [here](https://www.city.ac.uk/research/research-and-enterprise/research-ethics).

The participant information should include:

* Details about why the study is being undertaken
* Details about what taking part would involve for the participant (time commitment etc.)
* Details about will happen to the participants’ data.
* It should be written in lay language
* It should use a font size that will assist with the readability, and be age appropriate.
* If you are recruiting children, you may need more than one information sheet to ensure they are appropriate for each age group. You may also need information specifically for parents/guardians.
* If you are recruiting different participant groups (e.g. staff and students; nurses and service users) or there are more than one aspect to the study (e.g. an online survey and a focus group) you need to write a separate participant information sheet (and consent form) for each group/part.
* The information should be written on headed paper or have a digital logo, and clearly identify City as the responsible institution.
* If you are collaborating with or the study is being sponsored by another institution/organisation it may be appropriate to include identifying information, including the logo, of the collaborator/sponsor too.

A participant information sheet, i.e. a document containing written information, is not always the most appropriate way of providing potential participants with information about a study. For instance the use of videos (animated or otherwise) to explain to potential participants what taking part in the study would involve would be one alterative. This can be particular appropriate when recruiting children or individuals with reading difficulties. However, note you may still need to provide information, such as contact details, by other means (e.g. downloadable) to ensure easy access for participants.

Participants to online surveys and questionnaires should be given information about the study at the start of the survey to ensure they can make an informed decision as to whether or not they wish to take part, after which they should be asked to agree to take part in the study. It is particularly important to include information about withdrawing data (e.g. if the participant doesn’t complete the survey but closes the browser, will the data be up to that point be used in the study etc.) and to note where anonymity is not guaranteed (e.g. if IP addresses are being stored). A statement should be incorporated at the end of the survey. This statement should include:

* the researcher’s contact details; and
* information about who to contact if there is a problem, as well as any details of any relevant support organisations.

The option to download this information should be available. Policies underpinning third party survey software platforms differ and researchers are responsible for making themselves aware of the policies of their chosen survey tool. In addition, researchers must be aware of how the survey software provider will store the collated information and who can access it and, as appropriate, convey this information to participants. 

**TEMPLATE**

# **REC reference number, date and version of information sheet**

The reference number is generate in Research Ethics Online as soon as you start the application. All participation information sheets (and other study documents, such as consent forms and questionnaires) should have a version number and date, to ensure that any changes or amendments can be easily implemented and tracked appropriately.

# **Title of study**

This must be the same title as the application form. You should ensure that the title is understandable to a non-expert, i.e. avoid using jargon or unnecessarily academic language. A short title can be helpful for recruitment.

# **Name of principal investigator/researcher**

# **Invitation paragraph**

The invitation paragraph is **mandatory** and should explain to the participants that they are being asked to take part in a research study.

## **Suggested text:**

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.

# **What is the purpose of the study?**

Give details of the background and the aim of the study, as well as the duration of the study. If the study is undertaken as part of an educational programme details should be included here.

# **Why have I been invited to take part?**

Include inclusion (and exclusion if appropriate) criteria, to let the participants know why and how they are chosen, and how many others will be involved in the study. If students are being recruited, it should be clear that choosing to either take part or not take part will have no effect on assessments, marks or future studies. If employees (not just City) are being recruited, it should be clear that choosing to either take part or not take part will have no effect on their employment or promotion prospects etc.

# **Do I have to take part?**

This sections should include a clear statement that participation is voluntary, that participants may withdraw at any stage, or avoid answering questions which are felt to be too personal or intrusive, and an assurance that this will not affect any future treatment (where applicable) or penalised if they choose to withdraw.

## **Suggested wording to be amended as appropriate:**

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

If appropriate, include that once the data has been anonymised/published participants will no longer be able to withdraw their data. If the study is only collecting anonymous information, for instance a paper based or online survey, it should be made clear to the participants at which point they can no longer withdraw their data (e.g. once they have pressed submit, when they put the paper based survey in the return box). It should also be clear what will happen to any data collected up to the point of withdrawal (e.g. if it will be retained .

**What will happen if I take part?**This section should explain to the potential participants what taking part would involve for them. If the study involves more than one session or several tasks, you may want to use a table to make it easy for the participants to see what is involved. You should include information as appropriate about the following:

* How long will the participant be expected to be involved (e.g. one interview/focus group lasting 45-60 minute, 10 minutes to complete an online survey)
* How often will the participants meet the researcher/s if more than once
* What exactly will happen – e.g. collecting personal information, questionnaires, interviews (structured/semi-structured), focus groups, physical tests (e.g. using an exercise bike), give a blood/tissue sample (including information about the analysis of samples and quantity of blood required) etc.
* What is the research method used (simple, brief and in lay friendly language)
* Where is the research taking place
* How long will the research study last

# **What do I have to do if I take part?** (this can be included under ‘What will happen if I take part?)

Briefly and clearly explain what you will expect from your research participants, e.g. come to City, University of London to take part in a focus group to speak about their experience of being involved with a charity, watch a video and have their eye movements tracked, give a blood sample.

## **'THIS PARAGRAPH IS FOR OPTOMETRY PROJECTS ONLY**– the following must be inserted:

Although these procedures may give you useful information about your vision, they are not a full eye test that can be used for diagnostic purposes, and are no substitute for regular visits to your optometrist.

# **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

A list of all possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or possible side effects to the potential participant (outlining likely incidence and severity).

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

A list of possible benefits to the participant. If there are none, this should be stated. Indirect benefits, such as potential benefits to future patients, to the wider community and/or contributing to knowledge can be included here.

# **Expenses and Payments**

If you are offering any payment or incentive to the participants, this needs to be clearly explained in the participant information sheet. You should also consider if the payments may affect the participant’s benefits (e.g. job seekers allowance).

Information should include:

* Type of expenses, e.g. travel expenses, and how much
* Rewards – financial or otherwise
* Explanation of when, how (cash, voucher etc.) and why these payments are made

# **How is the project being funded?**

Information about any funding sources.

# **Conflicts of interests**

Information about any conflicts held by researcher / research team / organisation / funder.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**Provide information about how a participant can participate in the research. If separate tasks are required, please list them all.

# **Data privacy statement (this is mandatory for all studies collecting personal data)**

City, University of London is the sponsor and the data controller of this study based in the United Kingdom [if City is not the sponsor and/or data controller, amend asappropriate]. This means that we areresponsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The legal basis under which your data will be processed is City’s public task.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in a specific way in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible (for further information please see [https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/?q=privacy+notice)).

City will use your name and contact details to contact you about the research study as necessary. If you wish to receive the results of the study, your contact details will also be kept for this purpose. The only people at City who will have access to your identifiable information will be members of the research team, and, if appropriate, individuals with responsibility for monitoring and auditing at City, including of research projects. There may be occasions when regulatory authorities may access research data in accordance with their statutory powers. City will keep identifiable information about you from this study for xxx years after the study has finished.

You can find out more about how City handles personal data by visiting <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/data-protection-policy>. You can also read City’s general privacy notice by visiting <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/general-privacy-notice> . If you are concerned about how we have processed your personal data, you can contact the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) directly <https://ico.org.uk/>.

# **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?** (This does not have to be included if no identifiable information is collected and it is made clear elsewhere in the information that the data will be anonymous.)

This section should include information about:

* Who will have access to the personal data (before anonymising the data if applicable), including supervisor(s), collaborators, transcription services etc.
* How confidentiality/anonymity will be ensured (e.g. no personal identifiable information will be recorded, quotes will be anonymised/paraphrased etc.)
* Audio/video recording/photographs
* Any request for future use of data (e.g. contacting participants about a new study they may wish to take part in)
* Any restrictions on confidentiality – e.g. reporting of violence, abuse, self-inflicted harm, harm to others, criminal activity
* A statement of where the records will be stored (e.g. Figshare, OneDrive, locked filing cabinet, encrypted laptop), length of time records will be kept [usually 10 years at City] and details of destruction.
* A statement on publishing the data (e.g. via the UK Data Archive or Figshare) in line with Open Scholarship principles.

# **What will happen to the results?**

Details of what sort of publications, including possible future publications as well as the current thesis/report, might arise from the research and whether anonymity will be maintained. If the participants will receive a copy of the publication/summary of the results, include details of what they need to do in order to receive it. Note that if you are retaining the participants contact details in order to send them the results once the study has finished, you will require participants to explicitly consent to their data being kept for this purpose.

# **What will happen when the research study stops?**

This heading is only required if interventions are part of the study. In such instances, information about what will happen to the participant’s data if the project is stopped, including information about destruction, storage and use of collected data.

# **Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by City, University of London *[insert which committee here]* Research Ethics Committee.

# **What if there is a problem?**

Projects taking place in countries where it is possible that the participants will not be able to go through the standard complaints procedure (e.g. if participants may feel inhibited or unable to complain to City, University of London, for reasons of cost, language, literacy and culture) a local contact needs to be identified. This should be someone who is not directly involved in the research. The name of this person should be provided to the research ethics committee approving the application. The local contact needs to be made aware that they have to pass all written and verbal complaints/issues on to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee as soon as possible. **You must also amend the standard text below to reflect this.**

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through City’s complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is [name of project]

You can also write to the Secretary at:

Annah Whyton

Research & Enterprise Office

City, University of London

Northampton Square

London, EC1V 0HB

Email: [senaterec@city.ac.uk](mailto:senaterec@city.ac.uk)

# **Insurance** (not mandatory for low risk anonymous online surveys)

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study, subject to the terms and conditions of the policy. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone’s negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

# **Further information and contact details**

Contact details of someone who will answer any inquiries about the research (include details of supervisor/s if the researcher is a student). Only City email addresses and phone numbers should be used.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.**