Guidance on applying for Ethical Approval

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These notes are intended to help you when completing making an ethics application to the CIS Departmental Ethics Committee. Please read them carefully before making your application. Suggestions for improvement are also welcome – please email the author.

Applications for ethical approval for a study within the Department of Computer and Information Sciences are made through the online form available at: https://local.cis.strath.ac.uk/wp/extras/ethics/ Read the instructions and to make an application, click on the "New Application" link under the "As A Researcher" heading.

You will then be required to complete an online form with a number of specific headings. Guidance on how you should address each of these points is given below:

Title of research:

Hopefully obvious. Just a short title that is used as a label for the application.

Summary of research (short overview of the background and aims of this study):

"Research" in this context refers to the study you are undertaking (ethics applications are made by all categories of students and staff and so the titles have to be generic). Just provide a few sentences describing the context and purpose of the study which will help the reviewer understand the details of the application.

How will participants be recruited?

A brief statement on your recruitment strategy. The main things to ensure here that you are:

- Complying with GDPR guidelines by not abusing any email lists or addresses to which you might have access or violating the T&C's of any online platform you might be using.
- Describing an appropriate strategy that is not coercive and will result in a representative pool of participants for your study. This means we wish to understand **how** you will recruit people, not only the characteristics of those who you wish to take part. Your recruitment strategy will vary with the nature of your study, but in general the more personal data you are collecting then the more important it is to use cohort-based recruitment procedures (as opposed to approaching individuals directly).
- Ensuring that the participant demographics are also appropriate for the study. Certain classes of individuals (e.g. vulnerable groups or minors) may require additional safeguards to be put in place in order to protect their welfare (e.g. Disclosure checks or approval from the University Ethics Committee). If your study involves any of these groups then consult with your supervisor and also the University's "Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings" https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/rkes/Code_of_Practice_eighth_Feb17.pdf
- Clearly specifying any inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g. a necessary set of skills or experience or an age limit on participation) and how you will apply these.
- Confirming that the necessary permissions is in place to authorise any actions associated with recruiting participants (e.g. from the lecturer of the class if you are making an announcement,

the head or appropriate individual of any organisation you plan to visit, the organiser of an event).

- Please also include the text that you plan to employ in any recruitment emails or flyers.

What will the participants be told about the proposed research study? Either upload or include a copy of the briefing notes issued to participants. In particular this should include details of yourself, the context of the study and an overview of the data that you plan to collect, your supervisor, and contact details for the Departmental Ethics Committee.

The briefing notes (or participant information sheet) for participants should contain sufficient detail for them to decide whether or not they wish to participate in the study. As stated, this should be **a copy of the actual briefing notes** – a description of what they will contain is not sufficient.

When describing the data you plan to collect, you should also describe how you plan to use this data. For instance, if you are asking participants to complete a survey then will you extract quotes from responses, summarise overall trends, visualise aggregate responses etc.? There is no right or wrong answer here – the main point is that participants must be told how you plan to use the data they provide.

If you plan to collect and personal/identifiable data then make sure this is made very clear to potential participants.

Please also introduce yourself, include your University email address, the same details for your project supervisor, and for the CIS Departmental Ethics Committee:

cis-ethics@strath.ac.uk (a postal address is not required).

A template for a participant information sheet is included at the end of this document. Feel free to adapt this.

How will consent be demonstrated? Either upload or include here a copy of the consent form/instructions issued to participants. It is particularly important that you make the rights of the participants to freely withdraw from the study at any point (if they begin to feel stressed for example), nor feel under any pressure or obligation to complete the study, answer any particular question, or undertake any particular task. Their rights regarding associated data collected should also be made explicit.

The points above should all be covered in the consent form. Again, the important point is that this should be *the actual form* – not a description of it. Sometimes you may make use of a tool such as Qualtrics to capture feedback on a study or survey participants. In this case it makes sense to include the consent form at the opening of the survey, and capture agreement to participate through the survey tool (e.g. through a check box which indicates that participants consent to proceed). This is fine, and if this is the case then a link to the study can be provided here.

A template for a consent form is included at the end of this document. Feel free to adapt this.

What will participants be expected to do? Either upload or include a copy of the instructions issued to participants along with a copy of or link to the survey, interview script or task description you intend to carry out.

Once again, a copy of the task instructions should be uploaded (unless the task is very straightforward, such as completing an opinion or fact-finding survey which does not rely on completing a previous task, in which case a short description is fine).

The committee also needs to check the details of the task itself so please include a detailed description of the activities that you are going to ask participants to undertake. If you are carrying out a survey then you need to provide details of all questions that are going to be asked (or the script for a semi-structured survey). In many cases it is easier to provide a link to the survey itself if it is being carried out electronically. Please note that Google forms/surveys are not longer an acceptable technology, and any online surveys should be conducted using the University Qualtrics system (or similarly secure technology).

If you are asking participants to evaluate your software then please think very carefully about any data you ask them to provide (e.g. username or email address) and if these need to be "real" (in which case very careful justification is required). If they do not need to be real then emphasise this to participants and encourage them to create dummy data.

Ensure that your carefully describe how any data they provide (either explicitly or implicitly – e.g. step counts from a passive activity-monitoring app) will be handled.

If you require participants to install any software then please provide instructions for this and also the consequences – e.g. data being stored or potential charges incurred from an app requiring network access. Also provide instructions on how any device can be restored to its previous state.

What data will be collected and how will it be captured and stored? In particular indicate how adherence to the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will be guaranteed and how participant confidentiality will be handled.

This is hopefully fairly clear, and you should all be familiar with both the DPA and GDPR, but think carefully about any data you collect and its relevance to your study. This particularly applies to any demographic data (age, gender, location, job, year of study etc. etc.). Also remember the difference between anonymous and identifiable – anonymity does not guarantee non-identifiability.

If you are carrying out any surveys or collecting observations then please us the University's Qualtrics account - https://strath.qualtrics.com/

DO NOT use Google forms (or docs or any of this family) as the present issues with GDPR compliance.

If you do collect any personal data then you are legally required to provide participants with a Privacy Notice:
https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/rkes/ethics/Privacy_Notice_Research_Participants_v0.8.docx

How will the data be processed? (e.g. analysed, reported, visualised, integrated with other data, etc.) Please pay particular attention to describing how personal or sensitive data will be handled and how GDPR regulations will be met.

This ties in with the point above, and mainly concerns how any personal data is handled and reported. Even if you are not, you should ensure that the points you raise here are also communicated to participants. Also state your lawful basis for processing this data.

How and when will data be disposed of? Either upload a copy of your data management plan or describe how data will be disposed.

A Data Management Plan is typically required by all researchers and not (currently) necessary for your study, but it is still important that you do not hold onto the data any longer than required. A reasonable time is once your degree had been awarded (rather than your project submitted). Disposal of any personal data should be done more rigorously (e.g. by a digital shredder), and also think about how you might handle any backups which might have been made automatically.

☐ **I confirm that my supervisor has seen and approved both my planned study and this associated ethics application.**

By ticking this box you are confirming that your supervisor has read and approved this exact application that you are submitting (not just approved that you should apply for ethics, they need to have carefully checked every word on this form and the attachments). This also applies for any revised versions, which should also be checked. Remember that your supervisor is ultimately responsible for your study and will be held accountable if any issues arise or complaints are made.

Template Forms

The following pages contain copies of the templates for the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which have been taken, and adapted, from the University Templates (https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/researchknowledgeexchangeservices/universityethicscommittee/informationsheetconsentform/). **Please note that the University Templates contain references to the University Ethics Committee (both as approvers and the body to contact) which is incorrect for an application to the CIS Departmental Ethics Committee and why the forms below have been provided.**

Feel free to adapt the ones below for your study but **ensure that they are modified appropriately and any redundant information or instructions/highlighted text modified or removed**. The italicised text provides guidance on the information that needs to be provided and should be removed. Non-italicised text should remain (or be replaced with an equivalent alternative). The headings should be retained although you do not need to use these as they stand but do make sure that any alternatives you create address the points they identify.

Editable Word versions of these forms are available on the same page as this document.

Participant Information Sheet for [study]

[FOR USE WITH STANDARD PRIVACY NOTICE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS – REMOVE IF NOT REQUIRED]

Name of department: Computer and Information Sciences

Title of the study:

Introduction

This section should introduce the researcher to the participant, providing their name and University of Strathclyde contact details as well as their status/ role (e.g. 4th year Computer Science undergraduate student). The language used in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form should be tailored to the participants.

What is the purpose of this research?

This section should include the aims of the study, the reason for it and what it is trying to achieve.

Do you have to take part?

Explain that it is the participant's decision to take part in the research or not (i.e. that participation is voluntary) and that refusing to participate or withdrawing participation will not affect any other aspects of the way a person is treated (i.e. participants have a right to withdraw from the research without detriment).

What will you do in the project?

This should provide participants with information on what they will be asked to do in the study (e.g. completing a questionnaire, participating in interviews, evaluating software, etc). If relevant, information on payment/ reimbursement should be provided here. This section should also provide the location and duration of the study and dates that the participant should be aware of.

Why have you been invited to take part?

This should explain the types of participants that are needed to take part in the research. It should also include an explanation of the nature of the participant sample; any screening procedures necessary; any inclusion/ exclusion criteria; and any special skills/ attributes involved. If participants haven't been specifically invited to take part, e.g. if they have responded to a poster, the heading and information should be adjusted accordingly.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

This should explain any potential risk, any burdens imposed and any specific preparatory requirements (e.g. special diet, exercise). If there are no risks involved, this section should be removed.

What information is being collected in the project?

Explain what information is being collected, then specify which of the information includes personal or identifiable data. If personal information is being obtained from sources other than the data subject, explain clearly what the source is and what data is being collected. Also explain how the collected data will be used – e.g. aggregated with other results and summarised in your report, directly quoted in a journal or conference publication…

Who will have access to the information?
This section should provide information on the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. If there is a reasonable possibility that a participant may disclose information that you cannot keep confidential (e.g. disclosures of serious, imminent harm), then include the limits to confidentiality here also.

If personal information will be shared with any individuals or organisations outside the University, details of the external recipients should be provided. This includes any external transcription services or open access to data.

Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?
Information about data storage, retention and destruction should be provided here. Personal information should only be retained for as long as it is necessary. Anonymous research data can be retained indefinitely by depositing it in a suitable data repository. Funder policy and guidelines on retention periods should be adhered to.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

All personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Please read our Privacy Notice for Research Participants for more information about your rights under the legislation. *[provide paper copy if PIS is provided in paper format. Remove if you are not collecting any personal data – i.e. only collecting anonymous data with no consent form]*

What happens next?
Explain what a participant should do if they would like to find out more about the project, or if they would like to participate. Explain who they should contact, and that they will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If the participant does not want to be involved in the project then thank them for their attention.

Explain the process for participants receiving feedback after the research is complete. Inform the participant if the results are to be published.

Researcher contact details:
*This should include the name of the individual carrying out the investigation and University of Strathclyde email address (**do not include personal contact details such as mobile number or personal - rather than University - email address**).*

Chief Investigator details:
This should include the name of the Chief Investigator (your project supervisor) and their University of Strathclyde email address.

This research was granted ethical approval by the Department of Computer and Information Sciences Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the research, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact: **cis-ethics@strath.ac.uk**

Consent Form for [study]

[NB *You should alter this form to fit with the requirements of each individual study, pay particular attention to highlighted text]*

Name of department: Computer and Information Sciences
Title of the study:

Please check each item to indicate agreement.

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- ☐ [IF RELEVANT] I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e. how it will be stored and for how long).
- ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- ☐ I understand that I can request the withdrawal from the study of some personal information and that whenever possible researchers will comply with my request. This includes the following personal data:
    - [DELETE AND EDIT AS APPROPRIATE]
    - video recordings of physical tests that identify me;
    - audio recordings of interviews that identify me;
    - my personal information from transcripts.
- ☐ I understand that anonymised data (i.e. data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- ☐ I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- ☐ I consent to being a participant in the project.
- ☐ I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project (delete as appropriate, if recording is optional, allow the participant to indicate their choice by including a 'Yes / No').

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date: