

## Information for Research Students

### Introduction

Unless your research excludes human participants and is focused entirely on literature, students should acquire the following two very practical books:

Davies, Martin and Nathan Hughes. *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods*. 2d ed. London: Red Globe Press, 2014.

All students should read:

- Part 1, “Planning Your Research Project”. Chapters 1-3 will give you invaluable general research information and nuggets of wisdom such as *Keep it simple, Don’t make things more difficult for yourself than they need to be* or *Keep the focus tight*.
- Part 4, “The Last Gap”. Chapter 16 deals with writing the report.
- Part 2, “Quantitative Research”, **OR** Part 3, “Qualitative Research”, **OR** both if you use a mixed methods approach.

Farrimond, Hannah. *Doing Ethical Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Parts I and II are rather theoretical in nature and highlight the complexity of ethical research. From Part III, all students should read:

- Chapter 7, “Informed Consent”.
- Chapter 8, “Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality” (PAC).
- Chapter 12, “Internet Research and Ethics”.
- Chapters 9-11 are a helpful resource, if your research includes vulnerable groups, children, or young people.

Your dissertation should contain the following two or, depending on your methodology, three sections at the beginning of your research writing:

## **1 Literature Review**

You have to evaluate what has been written about the subject of your research and delineate how your investigation will be original in comparison to the current level of findings.

For further information, read p.37-42 in *Doing a Successful Research Project*.

The length of the Literature Review depends on the volume of available resources. In general, it should not exceed 50 pages.

## **2 Methodology**

In this section, you need to explain why you have chosen a particular method and how it suits your project. See “Selecting your methodology” (p. 23-26) in *Doing a Successful Research Project* to decide between or combine quantitative and qualitative research. Then progress to in-depth information in Part 2 and/or 3. You need to ensure that the participants appropriately reflect diversity.

Pure literature research is another common option, especially for Bible-based and doctrinal research.

For other appropriate methods, speak to your supervisor.

## **3 Ethical Considerations**

Apart from the detailed *Doing Ethical Research*, p. 42-48 in *Doing a Successful Research Project* provides a succinct overview of ethical issues.

If your research involves humans, prior to conducting interviews or sending out questionnaires, you are obliged to produce the following items and submit them to the NCIU supervisor as soon as possible to gain approval from the dissertation committee:

1. *Consent form*: See p. 190 in *Doing Ethical Research* and below for a sample. This type of consent is the default in a Western context. If your research involves individuals of an organization, you may have to get additional consent from the organization. For other types of consent, see chapter 7 in *Doing Ethical Research*.
2. *Information sheet*: See p. 191-192 in *Doing Ethical Research* and below for a sample.
3. *Interview questions*.

The student should write about all relevant ethical dimensions, which must include at least informed consent and PAC. The consent form(s), information sheet and interview questions should be put into an appendix.

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# Sample Consent Form and Information Sheet

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## SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

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[This could be printed on headed paper from your institution or plain paper with contact details]

Details of study: [include title, name of investigator, name of institution]

I have read and understood the information sheet and had the opportunity to ask questions

I understand that my data will be kept confidential (only shared with the research team) and kept in accordance with data protection legislation

I understand that my name will not be used in any outputs (publications, reports) [also: 'but we will refer to the group of which you are a member/use your job title' or 'how would you like to be identified in any outputs? \_\_\_\_\_']

I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason

[Optional: I agree to assign the copyright of my interview data to [name of the researcher] and that it will be stored in a data archive for future use, with identifying details removed]

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ [Make two copies, one to be retained by the participant, one by the researcher]

## SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET

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[I prefer a question and answer format, but you can list the points if you prefer. I have used an interview study on Type 2 diabetes as an example]

[Title of study]

You are invited to take part in the above study. Before you decide whether to participate, please read this information sheet carefully. If you have any questions please call/ask the researcher on the contact details below.

**What is the purpose of the study?** [short few line description of the purpose of the study]

We are studying how individuals and families think about their risks of getting Type 2 diabetes. We are also interested in what people do, in terms of health behaviour, in relation to this risk. It is hoped that this study will inform better prevention strategies for people who have Type 2 diabetes in their families.

**Why have I been invited?** [a sentence on sampling]

You have a family member (first-degree relative) with Type 2 diabetes or you have Type 2 diabetes yourself. You are between 18–60 years of age.

**What will happen if I take part?** [brief description of procedure]

If you decide to take part, researchers [name] or [name] will call you to arrange a convenient time to be interviewed. The interview will take about 1 hour and will be recorded. You will receive a £10 voucher for participating, as well as all travel costs paid (please keep the receipts). We will also ask you if you think any other family members would like to participate.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?** [sentence on direct/indirect benefits]

You will get to discuss your experiences of Type 2 diabetes in your family with the interviewer. The results of the study will hopefully feedback to improve clinical care for Type 2 diabetes.

**What are the possible risks of taking part?** [sentence on risks and further information e.g. helplines or additional sources of support]

Some people may find that thinking about diabetes worries them. Please ask your doctor if you have any questions or worries in relation to Type 2 diabetes. [optional: 'it will not affect your care/involvement in X project in any way if you decide not to participate'].

**Confidentiality and data protection** [a couple of sentences on how confidentiality/data protection will be ensured, including any limits]

All the information we collect will be treated as confidential and will only be shared with the research team of [me and my supervisor] [optional: except if requested by law/you tell me something that concerns your safety]. We will also make sure that your data is stored securely and anonymously (without your name on it) at the University and then the Data Archive. The audio-files of the interviews will be destroyed five years after the study.

**What will happen to the results of the study?** [brief details of likely outputs]

Short quotes from your interview will be used in research papers/presentations in a way that will not disclose your identity to others outside the study [For groups: 'You may recognize other family/group members from their interviews and they may recognize you']. The final results of this research will be circulated to doctors and researchers in the UK and elsewhere to help improve prevention.

**Who is organizing and funding the study?** [also the ethical approval/complaints procedure]

The study is funded by X. The study has been approved by the Social Science Ethics Committee at the University of X. If you have any issues or complaints about the study, please contact [insert name and contact details of authority, such as ethics officer, head of department or for students, your supervisor].

Who do I contact for further information?

If you have questions or want more information on the study, please contact [Your title and name] on [work telephone number] or by email [an institutional one].