

## **Interviews and the ethics review process**

Interviews are a good way of collecting data from participants but there several things you need to think about first and explore in your ethics application.

### **Recruitment**

The first thing to think about is how you might recruit people to interview in your research. From the start, you should make sure that your potential participant understands that the research is hosted by the University, so always use your UoS email to contact potential participants.

### **Personal social media**

We strongly advise not to use personal social media accounts to recruit for your research to ensure a safe professional distance between your personal online spaces and your research ones.

Where possible use research study specific accounts, one setup with your university email / contact details, ask institution accounts to post information (e.g. @SurreyPsych), or ask the gatekeepers of locked groups to post your recruitment advert (with gatekeeper permission).

Best practise in social media recruitment would be that the post links to a University-specific contact or online survey, and where possible the “reply” function should be disabled with no research discussion to take place in social media spaces.

If personal accounts are required, we strongly advise to contact already existing contacts (inc. personal and professional), networks or friendship groups.

If you wish to use personal accounts for public posting, making new contacts or posting to closed groups, please ensure you have an adverse publicity procedure in place (such as contacting your supervisor or assurance for advice) to ensure your safety online.

The best practise in social media recruitment also applies when reposting a recruitment advert from a dedicated professional research account from your personal account.

You should detail how you will use social media recruitment in the Study Protocol.

You can also use a gatekeeper (see 'Recruitment, gatekeepers and the ethics review process' for more information) to contact participants. A gatekeeper could be the owner or moderator of a social media group or the publisher of a newsletter who agree to allow you to post in their space or post your recruitment material on your behalf. In your ethics application state who this might be, how they have access to your participant group and send us a draft version of an email they could send on your behalf. Make sure you include your UoS email and do not include your personal mobile phone number. You can also recruit via your school's social media and email networks, providing you have their permission as gatekeeper to do this and provide evidence of this with your ethics application.

You should always provide your participants with a Participant Information Sheet before they meet you so they can understand who you are, what the research is about, what happens with their data and how they can withdraw from the research if they choose to. You can also email your participants a Consent Form before you meet, but this will mean they either must sign it and email it back to you (which can be time-consuming for them) or email you to say they consent beforehand. You can also obtain verbal consent by reading out from a Consent Form before your interview takes place and record this using your UoS MS Teams account or school issued digital audio recording device. This is especially useful if your interviews are taking place online or your participant group consists of people who do not usually engage with written materials.

In any case, you should always record a participant's consent through their completion of the Consent Form.

## **Organizing your interviews – online**

Where possible, its best to try and hold your interviews online using your UoS MS Teams account. The reason for this is that people are more likely to be able to find time to speak to you using these platforms (as they probably use them for work) and it will save you and them trying to find a time and quiet place to meet in person. You cannot use your personal MS Teams for interviews as these are not as secure as your UoS versions.

Where possible, try and use UoS MS Teams for your interviews as this platform will automatically save the recording of the interview in your UoS OneDrive (where all your research data needs to be stored) and give you a transcript (which will save you so much time). As UoS MS Teams records both audio and video, you need to ensure that your participants consent to this taking place within your Consent Form.

You can send participants a link from UoS MS Teams direct from the platform or through your UoS email.

## **Organizing your interviews – offline**

If you are meeting people offline to conduct your interviews, then things get a little more complex. Firstly, an interview location must be quiet and (especially if you are asking personal questions), private unless you are in a public location (e.g. a library or café). Also, you should always make sure that somebody knows where you are and when you are due back from the interview (this can be your supervisor through an email or text message). If you are planning on holding interviews in a workplace, then you will need to get permission from them to do so. You may also require a lone working risk assessment.

You can either choose to take notes during your interview or record the encounter, but you cannot use a personal mobile phone to do this. A digital audio recorder can be used but a much easier method is to take your laptop with you, open your UoS MS Teams platform, turn the camera off and record the interview that way.

## **Before and during your interview**

You will always need to submit with your ethics application a draft list or topic guide of your interview questions. This doesn't have to be a 'script' of your encounter, more an indication of how you see the encounter working in practice and what you intend to ask your participants.

When you meet your participant, it is good practice to remind them of who you are and what you are doing and what they are about to take part in. You can show them the [Participant Information Sheet](#) again and remind them of the [Consent Form](#).

Remember that consent is an ongoing process. A participant can choose to withdraw their consent at any point (up to a specific date/time stated by you) and ask that you delete the data you have collected from them. In your ethics application, you should think about what might happen if a participant is distressed because of your questions and how you might respond such as stopping an interview or providing them with details of support organizations.

You should also consider the power dynamic between yourself as a researcher, representing an institution and your participant. How might you feel if you were asked the questions you want to ask of them? What might you want to happen to make your experience safer or what extra information might you want to have included?

### **What do I need to include with my ethics application if my research involves interviews?**

- [Study Protocol](#), which should contain:
  - Details of how you will recruit your interview participants
  - Details of how your interviews will take place – online or in person?
  - Details of what platform you will use if you are holding your interviews online and where the data will be stored.
  - Details of who will know where you are (if you are holding in person interviews).
  - Details of how you will record your interview (UoS MS Teams is best)
  - Details of what you might do if a participant were distressed because of your interview
- A draft topic guide for your interviews
- [Consent form](#) and [Participant Information Sheet](#) tailored toward your interviews
- A risk assessment if you are conducting interviews in person
- Recruitment materials - emails, posters, social media posts