Recruitment Materials

Your application should always include your recruitment materials for review as part of the ethics review process.

These could be:

- The text of an email which you will share from your UoS email (you cannot use personal emails for research purposes)

- The text of an email which a gatekeeper will share on your behalf which asks potential participants to contact you at your UoS email

- The text of a social media post which asks potential participants to contact you at your UoS email

- A document attached to your application on Ethics RM of a study recruitment poster (you may use a QR code if it suits your research plans. For example – you want to provide a link to your UoS MS Forms survey etc)

- The text of an advertisement that you will use on a third-party participant survey recruitment site, such as Prolific, SONA (Psychology), USBee (Economics & Business) etc.

Each of these documents should include the following information:

- That you are a student at the University of Surrey and are conducting research to contribute toward your academic award

- That a potential participant should contact you at your UoS email (make sure you provide your email on the recruitment text!) if they wish to take part or a link/QR code to the online survey

- What the study is about (in brief – one or two sentences or provide a link to more information or the Participant Information Sheet) what a participant can expect to do if they take part and how long it will take

- Any specific inclusion/exclusion criteria (such as 'we are recruiting women 18-35' etc.)

- That the study has been approved by the University of Surrey Research Ethics Committee and provide your Ethics RM application reference number (this can be found at the top of your online ethics application on Ethics RM with the format ERM ID: XXXX-XXXX/XXXX-X)

- In general, but especially if you are using a poster/flyer, then it is best practice to have an end date for recruitment / study so that people do not contact you when your study has ended and know when to remove your poster (if you are using one)

- If you are using an incentive, e.g. a voucher, you can add this to the poster as it may help with recruitment OR if you are using an incentive, e.g. a voucher, this should also be included

Gatekeepers

A gatekeeper is any person or institution that acts as an intermediary between a researcher and potential participants. A gatekeeper may also have the power to grant or deny permission for access to potential research participants.

Gatekeeper approval is needed when you are accessing something in your project that requires explicit approval / access granted from the owner of that area. So, this could be access to participants in locked forums / in schools / in workplace settings. You need to attach with your ethics application something showing both that you asked the person in charge of gatekeeping this to use it in the way for your study, and (on same document) that they approved the use of it in this way. Gatekeeping could also be access to data, locations or other things that are restricted

Use of a gatekeeper will be necessary where a researcher does not have legitimate access to personal data (names and contact details) of potential participants; in such cases a gatekeeper who does have such access will need to make first contact on behalf of the researcher. In other cases, it may be good etiquette (though not mandatory) to use a gatekeeper.

Gatekeepers could include:

- health and social care professionals, such as those working with patients, children, or elderly

- headteachers and college principals
- an employer, for research within a workplace/organisation
- any adult whose permission is required to gain access to research participants within a community (in the UK or overseas), such as another family member (e.g. a parent of the participant), clergy, community leaders or community elders.
- An individual or organisation that runs a locked/access controlled social media or internet-based forum. This could be for specific participants (e.g. clinical groups) but would also be for general groups with restricted access (e.g. community, or interest-based groups)

You must describe your recruitment strategy in your protocol and give full consideration as to whether there is a need for a gatekeeper, as well as addressing any potential consent issues arising. You should also upload the letter/e-mail you intend to use to approach the gatekeeper to the Upload documents section in Ethics RM.

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.