**Consent Form Template and Guidelines for a Group Activity**

**(e.g., Focus Group/Sharing Circle) by Videoconference**

**This template includes guidelines identified by blue text.** **Please remove the guidelines and the examples that do not apply to your project as you complete each section.** Some sections may not apply to your research and should be modified or deleted to suit your project.

This template is intended to provide an overview of the information normally included in a focus group or sharing circle consent form. The goal is to communicate the essential elements of free and informed consent and to ensure that individuals can understand and agree to what will happen to them as a participant. You do not have to use this template or maintain its formatting. It is only a guidance document.

Please use non-technical language that participants can easily understand. Appropriate reading level and format needs to be considered for specific populations such as children, the elderly, populations with compromised literacy or unique cultural considerations.

The consent form should be written in the second person. Use “you” not “I”. However, first person or “I” should be used on the last page in “Signed Consent” and “Oral Consent”.

The consent form should be a minimum of 12-point font for clarity and ease of reading.

All information in the consent form must match/be congruent with your application form.



***Participant Consent Form***

**You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:** *Insert title of the research project*

**Student Researcher(s):** *Insert Name, Position (e.g., faculty, graduate or undergraduate student, post doc), Department, Institution, Institutional phone number and institutional email address. Do not include personal contact information (e.g., personal cell number, Gmail address).*

**Researcher(s):** *Insert Name, Position (e.g., faculty, graduate or undergraduate student, post doc), Department, Institution, Institutional phone number and institutional email address. Do not include personal contact information (e.g., personal cell number, Gmail address).*

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** *Insert Name, Position, Department, Institution, Institutional phone number and institutional email address. Do not include personal contact information (e.g., personal cell number, Gmail address).*

**Purpose and Objective of the Research:**

* *Describe in simple lay terms the purpose and objective of the research.*

**Procedures:**

* *Describe the research activities and details of the data collection event.*
* *Identify the online video conferencing platform you will use to conduct the data collection, e.g., Zoom, and include a link to the platform’s privacy policy. If there isn’t a web document with a clear and easily understood description of users’ privacy, to which you can link, provide a brief lay-friendly summary of how the platform will handle participants’ information. (Note: USask plans to discontinue Webex in Spring of 2022).*
* *If the data collection is being recorded, include a statement advising participants whether the recording will capture audio and/or video and whether there is an option if the participants would like to participate by phone.*
* *If the data collection will include video-recording, include a statement advising the participants that they can choose not to be video recorded by turning off their device’s camera.*
* *Provide an estimate of the time commitment of the participant.*
* *Identify who will transcribe any recordings of the focus group or sharing circle and state that they will sign a confidentiality agreement, if a third party.*
* Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Funded by:** *(If Applicable)*

* *Include the name of any industry sponsor or granting agency. This should include a statement of any actual or potential conflict of interest on the part of the researchers or sponsors.*

**Potential Risks:**

* *All foreseeable risks, side effects and discomforts must be stated. Risks might include social harms such as a breach of confidentiality, social stigmatization, threats to reputation, economic repercussions, physical harms, damage to relationships, and/or psychological harms, e.g., anxiety, regret, guilt, emotional, etc.*
* Risk(s) will be addressed by: *describe the strategies to minimize or manage the risks for participants.*
* *If potential risks or discomforts are anticipated or the research project is of a sensitive nature, include information on the arrangements/availability of counselling or other such services.*
* *If the research has the potential to reveal information that is required by law to be communicated to a law enforcement or other agency, (e.g. child abuse), inform your participant of your legal obligations.*
* *If appropriate, describe the circumstances under which you would respectfully ask someone to leave the study.*
* *If there are no foreseeable risks, please use the following statement:* There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Potential Benefits:**

* *State the benefits of this research both to the participant and to others, stressing that these benefits are not guaranteed. In cases where the objectives of the research project are purely scientific, refer to any societal benefits.*

**Compensation***: (If Applicable)*

* *Describe any compensation that will be offered to participants. If a course credit is available to University students, explain the process. The payment should not be such that participants may base their decision to participate on the potential material rewards. Be sure to include a statement that compensation will not be dependent on completion of the project.*
* *Describe how you will deliver the compensation to the participant, given their remote involvement.*
* *Please include the following statement, if compensation is being offered: "Any personal information collected as a record of honorarium payment will be stored separately from the data by the PI and may be kept for 7 years in case the University of Saskatchewan is subjected to a financial audit."*
* *If payments to participants will total over $100 (even if provided in smaller installments), please include a statement that they may need to provide their Social Insurance Number (SIN) to USask Financial Services for taxation audit purposes.*

**Confidentiality:**

* *Include a statement noting the inherent risks associated with the use of any online videoconferencing platforms, e.g.,* Please note that although we will make every effort to safeguard your data, we cannot guarantee the privacy of your data, due to the technical vulnerabilities inherent to all online video conferencing platforms.
* *Include a statement that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session, with a reminder to participants that researchers cannot guarantee that all participants will refrain from recording the session.*
* *Include a confirmation that you will conduct the videoconference in a private area of your home or office that will not be accessible by individuals outside of the research team during the data collection. Please also include a recommendation that the participants do likewise.*
* The researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.
* *Describe where the data collected will be disseminated, (e.g., thesis, articles, report to an agency or community).*
* *Describe how the data will be reported in publications. For example, if direct quotations will be reported, or if personally identifying information will be included in the report, this needs to be clearly stated. If the data will be reported in an aggregated or summarized form, this should also be stated.*
* *Describe the precautions that will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the participant.* ***(Note: To assure a participant of confidentiality means that the researcher will ensure that they do not disclose identifiable information about the participant in the reporting or dissemination of the research findings. Participants cannot be assured of anonymity as the researcher and other group members will know who they are).***

*Examples:*

1. “Although the data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences, the data will be reported in aggregate form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.”
2. “The data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations may be reported from the interview, all identifying information (list relevant possibilities such as the name of the institution, the participant’s position, etc.) will be removed from the report.”
3. “Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.”

**Storage of Data:**

* *Include the location of the videoconferencing platform’s servers and whether data will stored in Canada, e.g.,* Zoom servers are located in Canada and no data will be transmitted through, or stored on, any servers outside Canada.
	+ *The agreements that USask has with Zoom, WebEx and MS Teams ensure that all data transmitted using their software will only be routed through Canadian servers.*
* *If applicable, include a statement advising participants that you may store research data in your home. You should then describe what security measures will be in place (e.g., electronic data will be stored on a password-protected research-dedicated computer, with access restricted to the researcher, and will be backed up using USask cloud storage).*
* *Include a statement informing the participants that the recording will be saved to a local USask-managed computer rather than to the platforms’ internal cloud storage and the security protections (e.g., encryption) for that recording.*
* *Describe how and with whom physical and electronic data will be securely stored.*

*(Physical data must be stored behind two locks, e.g., locked cabinet in locked office. Electronic data may be stored on a password-protected computer during analyses, but moved to a USask system for long-term storage, e.g. OneDrive, Cabinet, or DataStore).*

* *Describe the storage period, e.g., the minimum required storage period is five years post-publication.*
* *If applicable, i.e., you intend to destroy the data following the required storage period, explain that once the data is no longer required and following the required storage period, the data will be destroyed beyond recovery.*
* *If applicable, explain that identifying information, (e.g., Consent Forms, Master Lists) will be stored separately from the data collected. If there is a master list, explain when it will be destroyed (e.g., when data collection is complete and it is no longer required).*

**Right to Withdraw:**

* Your participation is voluntary and you can participate in only those discussions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw, you may leave the group meeting at any time; however, data that have already been collected cannot be withdrawn as it forms part of the context for information provided by other participants.
* *(If Applicable):* Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position (e.g., employment, academic status, access to services) or how you will be treated.
* *In the case where the participants constitute a captive or dependent population, or where the researcher has, or has had, a relationship of power over the participants, or where participation is solicited as part of a person’s employment or educational role, describe the steps that will be taken to ensure that a person’s decision to withdraw will not jeopardize their standing within the institution or their relationship with the researcher. For example, when participants are solicited from a classroom for which the teacher is acting in the role of researcher, a clause such as the following may be included:* The teacher will not know until after the grades have been submitted who has decided to participate and who has not, so that your decision to participate or withdraw cannot have any impact on your standing in the class or on your final grade.

**Follow up:**

* To obtain results from the study, please: *describe how participants may find out about the research results. A summary of the results should be offered with a mechanism to provide the summary, (e.g. a website location or email address to request a copy of the results, paper, etc.). The summary should be readily accessible and understandable. A summary of the results is preferable to a copy of the thesis.*

**Questions or Concerns:**

* Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.
* This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office: ethics.office@usask.ca; 306-966-2975; out of town participants may call toll free 1-888-966-2975.

**Continued or On-going Consent:** *(If Applicable):*

* *Explain how you will handle ongoing consent when the research involves follow-up interactions, occurs over multiple occasions or an extended period of time.*

**Oral Consent:**

* *Given the remote data collection, it is recommended to collect oral consent instead of signatures.*

I read and explained this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant’s consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

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| *Name of Participant* |  | *Researcher’s Signature* |  | *Date* |