

(The College/School logo must be used unless the Ethics Committee specifically permits you not to.)

This is an example of a Plain Language Statement with suggested headings.

! Remember to delete blue text on all samples before you submit your own version for ethical consideration !

**Guidelines on preparing a Plain Language Statement.**

Plain Language Statement

(also sometimes called Participant Information Sheet)

(Checklist at end of this document)

A Plain Language Statement (PLS), (also known as Participant Information Sheet) which clearly identifies the purpose of the study and what will be required of the participant; must accompany each Ethics Application. The following are guidelines for producing this.

Potential recruits to your research study must be given sufficient information to allow them to decide whether or not they want to take part. A Plain Language Statement should contain information under the headings given below where appropriate, and in the order specified.

It should be written in simple, non-technical terms and be easily understood by a lay person. Use short words, sentences and paragraphs. 'The readability' of any text can be roughly estimated by the application of standard formulae. Checks on readability are provided in most word processing packages.

The text under each heading is given as an example only and may be modified to suit the purposes of each individual study.

The Plain Language Statement must carry the College/School logo and clearly identify the School/College where the research is being carried out.

If you choose to retain this ‘frequently asked questions’ format of the statement, then please remove headings 1 and 2 and explain at the outset that you are answering some frequently asked questions.

**1. Study title and Researcher Details**

Is the title self-explanatory to a lay person? If not, a simplified title should be included. Research details should be clearly identified as follows -

* University (statement to be printed on University letterhead, or logo added)
* School or subject area involved
* project title
* principal (and other) investigator(s) (including contact information for these) (use only university email addresses and do not disclose personal telephone numbers)
* supervisor, if it is a student research project
* degree for which the research is being undertaken, if it is a student research project.

**2. Invitation paragraph**

This should explain that the participant is being asked to take part in a research study. The following is a suitable **example**:

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this'. (Thanks may go at the end of your PLS if you prefer)

**3. What is the purpose of the study?**

The background and aim of the study should be given here. Also mention the duration of the study.

**4. Why have I been chosen?**

You should explain how and why the participant was chosen and how many other participants will be involved.

**5. Do I have to take part?**

You should explain that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. You could use the following suggested paragraph:-

'It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason'.

If potential participants are students of the University or other institution it is appropriate to state that a decision not to participate will not affect their grades in any way.

Participants must also be informed that refusing to take part, or withdrawing from the research after they have started, will not jeopardise their relationship with the researchers in any way (e.g. teacher/student relationship).

**6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

You should say how long the participant will be involved in the research and how long the research will last. You should explain the procedures to be followed (e.g. surveys, interviews, video-taping, audio-taping, etc.). This should include a description of what participants are expected to do if participating in the project and the anticipated time involved.

**7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Suggested paragraph:

'All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.'

However, you also need to point out that there may be limitations to the promise of confidentiality e.g. if the research is taking place in a unique location which might be identified, if a participant is in a specific job which may be identified from the context, or if there were to be a Freedom of Information request.

You should always bear in mind that you, as the researcher, are responsible for ensuring that when collecting or using data, you are not contravening the legal or regulatory requirements in any part of the UK. This is **not** the responsibility of the Ethics Committee.

We are now required to include a specific paragraph about our duty of care to pass information to relevant bodies should potential harm be disclosed to the participant or others.

* “Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.”

OR perhaps for younger participants

* “Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.”

OR if relevant

* “Please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed; due to the limited size of the participant sample.”

**8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

You should be able to tell the participants what will happen to the data and to the results of the research. When will the data be destroyed? When are the results likely to be published? Where can they obtain a copy of the published results? You might add that they will not be identified in any report/publication.

**9. Who is organising and funding the research?**

The answer should include the organisation or company sponsoring or funding the research (e.g. your academic institution, an external funding body such as a research council). This is unlikely to be relevant for UG and PGT students - if this is not applicable, do not include this paragraph.

**10. Who has reviewed the study?**

You should add that the project has been reviewed by the School ………………………. Ethics Forum.

**11. Contact for Further Information**

You should give the participant a contact point for further information. This can be your name or that of your supervisor involved in the study.

It is also required that you give a statement that:

“If you (participants) have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of …………………………. Ethics Officer, email: …………..@glasgow.ac.uk”

#### Checklist

#### Basic information you should include in your Plain Language Statement

1. College/School of …………………………/University of Glasgow logo at top.
2. Identification of the University, the College/School involved, the project title, the Principal and Other Investigators (including contact details if appropriate.

The Ethics Committee recommends that you supply only University of Glasgow contact details. For your own privacy and safety, you should NOT provide personal contact details).

1. Details of what involvement in the project will require (e.g., interviews, questionnaire, audio/video recording of events), estimated time commitment, and any risks involved.
2. You should provide information as to how participants’ contact details were obtained and/or how potential participants were selected.
3. If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for privacy/anonymity.
4. If participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers, a clear statement that involvement in the project will not affect ongoing assessment, grades, management, employment or treatment of health (as relevant).
5. A statement that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any data previously supplied.
6. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, making it clear that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations (e.g. freedom of information claim, or mandatory reporting in some professions).
7. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period and how it will be destroyed.
8. Explanation if data may be used for purposes other than those specified.
9. Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of this research project that they can contact School of …………………………. Ethics Officer; provide email address (available from College ethics website).
10. Any other relevant information.

End of Guidance on Plain Language Statement \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_