How to Write a Participant Information Sheet (PIS): guidelines and examples

These guidelines have been prepared in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans available at http://www7.health.gov.au/nhmrc/publications/synopses/e35syn.htm

All research involving human participants will need Participant Information Sheets (PISs). These are given to the participants to keep, and should be specific to a group of participants. If there is more than one group, you will probably need more than one PIS. The need to obtain written consent will vary with the nature of the research project. For details see ‘How to Write a Consent Form: guidelines and examples’.

PISs should be written at the level of comprehension of the reader so that a person’s decision to participate is based upon sufficient information and understanding.

A Participant Information Sheet should include the following features:

1. Use UoW/AHS letterhead.
2. Label the document ‘Participant Information Sheet for ………………” targeting each type of participant.
3. The title of the research project.
4. The researcher(s) name and contact details.
5. The supervisor's name and contact details (for student research).
6. The Unit or Faculty in which the researcher is based.
7. The funding body for the research (e.g. Australian Research Council, Drug Company, Wollongong City Council, NHMRC).
8. The aims of the research.
9. Research procedures to be used and if appropriate how the information will be recorded eg using audiotape or videotape.
10. The amount of the participant’s time required
11. The purposes of the procedures.
12. The number of times the procedure/task will be repeated.
13. Any risks, inconveniences and discomforts that could be reasonably anticipated should be clearly explained in lay terms.
14. For research in a clinical/classroom/or service setting, explain the relationship between the research and the care/teaching/service organisation, and the relationship of the researcher to that organisation.
15. Any anticipated uses/benefits of the research. Do not raise unrealistic expectations.
16. Offer to answer any questions the potential participant may have concerning the research and procedures.
17. Inform potential participants that they are free to refuse to participate or, having consented, to withdraw their consent without that refusal or withdrawal affecting their treatment, care, studies, their relationship with the service provider, the AHS or the University of Wollongong (depending on which, if any, is relevant to the research and the participants).
18. Explain how data will be collected and stored.
19. Explain what will be done with the information. Will it be used in presentations/publications/ thesis?
20. If appropriate, include a statement that participants' anonymity and/or confidentiality will be maintained. Anonymity can only be provided if no one (including the researchers) knows who the participants are. If confidentiality (identity not disclosed) is to be preserved, explain how this will be done (eg. assigning numbers or pseudonyms rather than names in the written records; reporting only grouped data, etc).

21. A statement should be included stating that if the participant has any concerns or complaints regarding the way in which the research is or has been conducted, they should contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

To capture the points above, we suggest using the following headings:

1. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR ............
2. PROJECT TITLE: ................
3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
4. RESEARCHERS or INVESTIGATORS
5. METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS or WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO
6. POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS
7. FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH
8. ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

Examples (please note that these are not prescriptive but only a guide)

• Example of Participant Information Sheet for Teachers
• Example of two Participant Information Sheets for Children
• Example of Letter of Information to Parents/Caregiver
• Example of Letter of Information to School Principal
This PIS is a guide only. If appropriate, you may decide to insert your own content under the headings which are consistent with requirements outlined in section 1.7 of the national statement.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

TITLE: Research Study into the Impact of Professional Learning for Teachers through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Online Modules

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to investigate the challenges and consequences for teachers when they use online modules for their professional learning, and whether the ideas presented transfer into their classroom practice. The study also wishes to ascertain the impact of teacher professional learning on student ICT experiences.

INVESTIGATORS
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METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS
If you choose to be included, you will be asked to participate in a one-day school visit by a member of the research team. On this visit the researcher will conduct a 30 minute interview that will be audiotaped to ascertain the factors that have supported or inhibited your use of the online modules. Typical questions in the interview include: Which module did you decide to undertake and why? What aspects of the module and support have been useful in your teaching? What aspects of the module and support have not been useful in your teaching? In what ways have your students benefited from you undertaking to do the module? We also request your permission to observe your classroom teaching for one hour if you are implementing ideas from the online modules in your classroom. We also wish to audio-tape a 30 minute interview with 3 of your students together about their response to your use of technology in the classroom and collect work samples that represent their use of ICT.

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS
Apart from the 30 minutes of your time for the interview and observing your teaching for one hour, we can foresee no risks for you. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH
This study is funded by a research grant from the Department of Education and Training (DET). This research will provide a basis for future decisions on the development of online modules for teachers and the support required for their use. Findings from the study will be published in a report to the DET and possibly published in educational journals. Confidentiality is assured, and the school, you and the students will not be identified in any part of the research.
ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS
This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN

Dear student,

This is an invitation for you to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The research is called *Study into the Impact of Professional Development for Teachers through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Online Modules*. Your teacher has been involved in a professional development activity to improve his/her ways of using technology (computers) in teaching. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether this professional development has helped you to use computers in your classroom.

**INVESTIGATORS**

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**WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO**

If you choose to participate you will be asked to be involved in a 30 minute interview with two other students about their use of technology in the classroom. The interview will be recorded on a tape recorder. Typical questions include: Do you remember the activity you did with Mr/Ms XXX class that involved using computers to XXX? What did you have to do? What did you like about the activity? What didn’t you like about the activity? What did you learn from the activity? How did the technology help your learning (or not)? What other ways do you think technology could be used in this class? We would also like to collect a few photocopies of pieces of your work that represent your use of technology.

Apart taking 30 minutes of your time for the interview and collecting a few photocopies of your work, we can foresee no risks for you. You are free to decide if you want to be involved in this project or not and you can stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating any information you have given will not be used. This study is funded by a research grant from the Department of Education and Training (DET). If you decide to help us in this study, you will provide us with valuable information about how to best support your teacher in using technology in the classroom. A report will be provided to the Department of Education and Training but we will not use your name in any part of the research.

**ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS**

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you are not happy with the way this research has been conducted, you can tell your parents or the teacher who can contact the Ethics Officer at the University on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN

Dear Student

This is an invitation for you to participate in a study conducted by the researchers at the University of Wollongong. The research is called *Investigating Teachers’ Use of Computer Animation in Primary Mathematics Classes*. The purpose of the research is to investigate whether your teacher uses computer animation in his/her teaching and whether this is a good way to help you understand the mathematical concept of fractions.

These are the people from the university involved in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honours Student</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
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WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

If you have been selected as one of eight students in the two groups you will be participating in six lessons in your normal class where your teacher teaches a unit of work using the “computer animation” strategy. A researcher will observe you during the six lessons while you make the “animation” movie. During the six lessons the researcher will audio record your group discussions as well as writing down notes on what they see. The researcher may also ask to copy any planning or sketching you do and photograph your animation as you create it, you will not be in the photos, just your work. You will also be asked by the researcher to have three 30 minute, individual, audio recorded interviews where the researcher will ask you some questions about using computer animation. Some questions you might be asked are:

* Do you remember the activities Mr/Ms ### used with you to make an “animation” movie on fractions?
* What did you have to do?
* What did you like about the activity?
* What didn’t you like about the activity?
* What did you learn from the activity?

Apart from the three individual 30 minute interviews and observation and audio recording of your group working on the animation project in the six lessons, we can foresee no risks for you. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has been gathered to that point.

This research will provide a basis for future decisions on the development of “computer animation” and its use as a teaching strategy for student learning in K-6 NSW mathematics. Findings from this study will be published in a thesis and possibly published in educational journals. We will not use your name and the school, yourself and your teacher will not be identified in any part of the research.
If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research about the way this research has been conducted, you can tell your teacher or parents or contact the University Ethics Officer, on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
LETTER OF INFORMATION TO PARENTS/CAREGIVER

Dear Parent/caregiver

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project conducted by the University of Wollongong on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. The project is entitled *Research study into the impact of professional learning for teachers through information and communication technologies (ICTs) online modules*. We write to seek your approval and assistance to conduct research and to involve your child as a participant.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
The purpose of the research is to investigate the challenges and consequences for teachers when they use online modules for their professional learning and whether the ideas presented transfer into their classroom practice. The study also wishes to ascertain the impact of teacher professional learning on student ICT experiences.

INVESTIGATORS
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METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS
If you agree for your child to be included, your child will be asked to participate in a 30 minute group interview concerning their use of technology in the classroom. The interview will be with two other children and will be audio-taped. Typical questions include: Do you remember the activity you did with Mr/Ms XXX class that involved using computers to XXX? What did you have to do? What did you like about the activity? What didn’t you like about the activity? What did you learn from the activity? How did the technology help your learning (or not)? What other ways do you think technology could be used in this class? We would also like to collect a few photocopies of your child’s work that represents his/her use of technology.

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS
Apart from the 30 minutes of your child’s time for the interview and collecting a few photocopies of their work, we can foresee no risks for your child. Your child’s involvement in the study is voluntary and he/she may withdraw from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has provided to that point.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH
This study is funded by a research grant from the Department of Education and Training (DET). This research will provide a basis for future decisions on the development of online modules for teachers and the support required for their use. Findings from the study will be published in a report to the DET and possibly published in educational journals. Confidentiality is assured, and your child will not be identified in any part of the research.
ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS
This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research about the conduct of this research, you can contact the Ethics Officer, on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal

We would like to invite two teachers at your school to participate in a research project conducted by the University of Wollongong on behalf of the Department of Education and Communities. The project is entitled *Research study into the impact of professional learning for teachers through information and communication technologies (ICTs) online modules*. We write to seek your approval and assistance to conduct research.

The purpose of the research is to investigate the:

- challenges and consequences for teachers when they transfer professional learning into practice
- conditions that support teachers to expand the use of ICT in their teaching and professional learning
- impact of teacher professional learning on student ICT experiences.

Approval is sought to visit the school for one day. At this visit a researcher would like to interview the teacher for 30 minutes about how they use the ICT modules in their teaching and observe these teachers in the classroom for one hour. In addition we would interview three of their students together for 30 minutes, and collect a few samples of work. The classroom observations will focus on the teachers’ classroom use of the modules. The students will be interviewed to ascertain their views about using ICT in the classroom.

The research is being funded by NSW DET and ethics has been reviewed by NSW DET and the University of Wollongong’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Please find attached to this letter the Participant Information Sheets for the teachers, children and parents/caregivers.

The findings of this research will provide a basis for future decisions on the development of online modules for teachers and the support required for their use. If there are any ethical concerns you can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact members of the research team.

Yours sincerely

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