

ARTS AND HUMANITIES ETHICS COMMITTEE
Consent Forms for Research Participants

What is a consent form?

A consent form enables the researcher and participant to formally document the process of informed consent. It involves more than the participant simply agreeing to participate and should provide evidence that the participant is making an informed and voluntary decision to take part in your research.

This form acts as a written protection of the participant's basic rights. It also stands as your AUDITABLE commitment to informed consent and ethical research.

Wherever reasonably possible a written record of informed consent to participate in research should be secured. If a written record of informed consent cannot be secured, there must be a 'clear affirmative action' on the part of the participant to indicate that they have consented.

What information should a consent form contain?

A consent form should include the title of the research and the name of the researchers. It should also contain the Ethics Committee name and reference, and in the case of student projects the name and contact details of the student's supervisor.

A consent form should provide evidence that the participant:

- *understands what the research is about and what is involved*
- *has had the chance to ask questions about the research*
- *understands that they can withdraw from the study at any time, and has been provided with details of how to do so*
- *understands what will happen to their data (including use in future / secondary analysis or research)*
- *understands that their right to confidentiality will be maintained*
- *has agreed to take part in the study*
- *has agreed to be recorded (audio / video) if this is the case*

A consent form should be signed and dated by the participant and the researcher.

What does a consent form look like?

In order to provide the above evidence, the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee recommends using tick boxes (YES / NO) for a series of statements or questions, as illustrated in the example below.

	YES	NO
Have you read the information leaflet about the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(...and so on....)

Appropriate and accessible language should be used to ensure participants understand what is required of them.

Adjusting the typeface, font size, and spacing between lines can help to ensure participants are able complete the form easily.

Check the AHEC website for examples (www.york.ac.uk/hrc/ahec).

Recording Consent

You need to maintain records of participants' consent to be involved in your research. You need to be able to provide evidence of who consented, when they consented, what they were told at the time, how they consented, and whether they have withdrawn consent.

Completed consent forms need to be stored securely:

- hard copies must be kept in locked cupboards or drawers on university premises.
- virtual copies must be kept in approved University file systems - either the Google drive or your Department's Windows file store - and shared only with those who need to know.
- you should not keep duplicates; if, for example, you scan hard copies, you should then destroy the original hard copies. Your department should have procedures in place for the secure destruction of paper with personal details on it.

For more information on secure storage, see: <https://www.york.ac.uk/library/info-for/researchers/data/storing/>