

Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee

GUIDANCE ON USING VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) SYSTEMS

There are known risks of causing distress or physical discomfort when using VR: it can lead some people to feel nauseous and experience increased anxiety. If your research requires you to ask people to use a VR game or experience, you are advised to follow the guidance below. If for any reason you cannot, then you should explain clearly in your ethics application why you cannot follow this guidance, and explain what steps you are taking to mitigate the risks.

- Choose to only recruit people who have previous experience with VR systems and have NOT previously experienced physical discomfort or anxiety as a result of using a VR system.
 - **Justification:** People who have previous experience using VR are less likely to feel physical discomfort or increased anxiety as they are already familiar with using the type of system.
- If working with people who are unexperienced with VR systems, ensure you include a familiarisation activity before your real data collection/filming activity. This familiarisation activity should be around 3-4 minutes in duration, and allow the person to experience motion in the same manner in which motion is controlled within your longer experience. That is, if you have created a VR game that you wish to evaluate that primarily uses teleportation for motion, then the familiarisation activity should also use teleportation. After the familiarisation activity you must ask them how they are feeling and whether they feel nauseous at all. If they do, you should not continue with the work any longer.
 - **Justification:** Although people are told they are free to withdraw at any time from a study and without providing a reason, it can be difficult for someone to withdraw if they are already in the data collection/filming phase. By including a familiarisation activity, you are making it clear that you are aware that some people experience physical discomfort when using these systems, and that it is not a problem if they wish to withdraw. Otherwise, there is a risk they may feel obligated to continue.
- Ensure people will spend no longer than 20 minutes in a VR experience.
 - **Justification:** The effects of engagement with VR experiences are still somewhat undetermined, so minimising exposure to just 20 minutes is considered reasonable, especially for people unfamiliar with using the technology.

- Make sure that they understand how to withdraw from the experience, and are able to take off the equipment easily. It can be beneficial to have them rehearse taking off the headset, especially if headphones are being used as well.
 - **Justification:** Some people may be worried about breaking the expensive equipment if they take it off themselves. By having them practice removing the headset you are further emphasising that it is okay for them to withdraw if they no longer wish to be involved.