**Guidance Notes for L&LS Ethics approval**

The overarching aim of the Committee is to ascertain whether the applicant has mechanisms in place to ensure:

1. that participants are able to provide informed consent for taking part in the study, and;
2. that participants and researchers will suffer no harm as a consequence of the activities undertaken.

These guidance notes provide important information about how to respond to the questions on the ethics approval forms. You should read them carefully and reflect on how the questions relate to your particular project. In some cases, you may wish to -- and it is permissible to -- reuse some of the wording provided here.

**Section 1: Applicant information**

**Section 2: FOR PG and UG STUDENTS ONLY. Your supervisor must read and approve your application form before submission** or it will be returned to you without review. Remember to schedule time for this when planning your project. By submitting this form, you confirm that your supervisor has approved the summary of your research and the participant information sheet.

**Section 3:** Please provide the project's expected/desired start date, and indicate how long you intend to collect data under 'Duration'.

**Section 4:** Summary of research proposal

4.1 *Aims and objectives of the research.* This should be a concise summary of your entire project (not just the part for which you are seeking ethics approval). Explain, keeping the use of technical terms and jargon to a minimum, what you are investigating and why it is important. You should be able to use some of this text in your participant information sheet, which will introduce participants to your project.

4.2 *Recruitment.* Explain how many participants it is necessary for you to recruit and why. Detail your recruitment procedures. Say when/how prospective participants will be provided with the participant information sheets, and how long they will have to decide whether to take part (ie., do you expect them to agree immediately, sign the consent form, and begin the task(s), or will they have time to go away and think about participating). This will depend on the type of task you are asking them to do - - the more stressful/time-consuming/invasive, the more time they should have to decide.

4.3 *Methods of data collection.* In this section, please restate the proposed start and end date for data collection. Describe EXACTLY what task(s) participants will do. Do not just say "I will record participants doing X" -- will your recordings be audio, video, a mixture, or paper/computer-based records (ie., of y/n answers)? If you have multiple tasks, imagine taking one participant all the way through the experiment or
set of tasks, and write down all the steps. How long do you estimate it will take to perform the task(s)? Will participants be alone or in groups? Will you or others be present while they perform the task? Will they have a chance to practice? Is this when you will obtain written consent?

**Note on the use of deception in linguistic research:** in consultation with the University Ethics Committee, we have ascertained that you need not consider your research deception if you simply omit to tell participants exactly what linguistic feature you are investigating. For example, you are NOT being deceptive if you are interested in the production of intervocalic voiced consonants but your information sheet tells participants you are researching the dialect spoken in region X. Deception consists of telling your participants a deliberate untruth; it should also be noted that while this is not always unethical, it is probably unnecessary.

4.4.i. *Project Information Sheets and consent forms*

The Project Information Sheet should be written clearly and concisely, with a minimal use of acronyms or technical language. Detailed guidance on constructing a Project Information Sheet is included in Annex I, and there is a template at the end of the application form that you are encouraged to use.

The Consent Form should contain a ‘tick box’ list of key information relating to the nature of the participant’s engagement with the project. A Sample Consent Form is included in Annex II. Where participants’ language is not English, it is necessary to include English and non-English copies of the information sheet and the consent form in the application.

4.4.ii. *Feedback*

It is not common practice in L&LS projects to provide individual feedback to participants. You may wish to say that you will provide summaries of the research findings on request. If your project has a website or other public presence, you should refer to this here.

4.5. *Anonymity*

It is expected that participants will be offered anonymity. You need to specify here how you will anonymise your data (eg., transcripts should be coded, and the key and transcripts safely stored in separate locations). You should also state that you will not use real names or any other identifying information in publications.

4.6 *Data collection*

4.6.i. Please detail the kind of data you will be collecting (eg., paper-based questionnaires, internet survey results, audio recordings of word lists, videotaped interactions).

4.6.ii. *Electronic storage* [amend this wording as appropriate for your project]

Electronically stored data (eg. audio/video recordings, transcripts) should be transferred to the University of York secure server at the earliest opportunity. If data is stored on a personal or University-supplied laptop while in the field, your device
must be password protected. Back-up copies of electronic data stored on an external hard drive, USB stick, or similar must be encrypted. Please see Annex III for information about storage/encryption procedures.

4.6.iii. Paper storage [amend this wording as appropriate for your project]
Hard copies of consent forms and any other forms containing personal information (including the code key if relevant) should be stored in a locked drawer/filing cabinet/cupboard in a lockable room in the L&LS Department.

4.6.iv. Destroying data
Whenever possible, we encourage researchers to request that participants agree to let the data they provide be stored for future research, especially when that data is recorded speech. Participants MUST be made aware of this on the information sheet and consent form. While no absolute time limits are provided, the Data Protection Act (1988) mandates that researchers periodically review whether data should continue to be held or be destroyed.

4.6.v Data sharing outside your department/the university
Researchers should ensure the committee that anonymity will be preserved, and that the researcher will retain the capacity to destroy data upon the completion of the project, where data is transferred to a third-party agent.

4.6.vi. Exporting data outside of the EU [amend this wording as appropriate for your project]
You can share data will collaborators within institutions which are “safe harbours” outside the EU (and will uphold the Data Protection Act (DPA)), or after ensuring that your collaborator will be committed to upholding the DPA. It is advisable in such cases to ask the collaborator or their institution to sign an agreement stating how the data will be treated, protected, and stored. If data will be under the shared responsibility of both UoY and an institution outside the EU, or only of the institution outside the EU, participants will need to be told in advance that data will be taken out of York.

4.7.i & ii: Risks to participants and researchers.
Most research in L&LS carries no foreseeable risk of harm. If this is the case for your project, it is acceptable to say so. Whilst you are encouraged to think seriously about any potential risks, it is not necessary to invent them (e.g., boredom is not a risk). Where the researcher does identifies risk to participants or to him/herself, it is vital that safeguards are in place to mitigate against the impact of these risks. For example, if there is a risk of emotional distress due to being asked to discuss provocative topics or listen to speech produced under duress, your Project Information Sheet should mention this. In extreme cases it might be relevant to include the contact details of relevant help groups. Where risks to researcher personal safety are identified -- for example, if conducting participant interviews in dangerous areas -- applicants should identify appropriate safeguards; for example, the use of a ‘buddy’ scheme whereby researchers are accompanied to interview
locations by a second individual, or a ‘check in’ system whereby researchers contact an third party on a regular basis upon the understanding that agreed upon action is taken in the event of a missed communication. The latter is especially relevant to postgraduate researchers, who should keep their supervisor informed of all fieldwork.

Only if you will be collecting data outside the EU you must do following and copy the text below in addition to your response to this question:

I have contacted Jacky Glanville, Insurance Officer, Health, Safety and Welfare Department, (jacky.glanville@york.ac.uk) about my study, and can confirm that my research is covered by the University of York Public Liability Insurance for negligence

4.7.iii: University risks
In most cases there will be no foreseeable risks to the University.

4.7.iv: Financial conflict of interest
Are you being funded by an organisation that has a vested interest in your research achieving a particular outcome? This is probably only relevant if you have non-research council funding, but is worth thinking about even if you have funding from a charity.

4.8.v: Any other issues
Self-explanatory.

Section 5
Please read the information each tickbox and only tick it if relevant to your project. For instance, the box mentioning indemnity and Sue Final is relevant only where the research may involve serious risk to either the subject of the research or the researchers themselves, or where the research is being carried out overseas. It is perfectly acceptable to leave some of these boxes blank.
Annex I: Designing Information Sheets for Research Participants (see link to Information Sheet model)

What is an information sheet?
The purpose of an information sheet is to provide potential participants with the information they need in order to make an informed choice about taking part in your research. The information offered should be clear, concise, and understandable.

What information do participants need?
From reading your information sheet participants should be able to learn about the following:

- What is the research about?
- Why is the research being carried out?
- Who is carrying it out – the researcher and the institution?
- Has the research been the subject of ethical review (provide details – including a contact for the Chair of the Committee)?
- What will happen to participants/what will they be asked to do – when, for how long, where, and with whom?
- Do they have to take part?
- What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?
- Will participants be paid to take part, or will any expenses be covered?
- What will happen to their data? Might it be used for future research?
- How will their rights to confidentiality be maintained?
- Can they withdraw from the study and what will happen to their data if this happens?
- What happens next and who can they talk to about taking part in the research?

What does an information sheet look like?
Information sheets vary in length, design, and format depending on a range of factors such as the type of research being carried out, the type of participants required, and the level of participation involved. Nevertheless the style, format, and content of your information sheet should be designed specifically for your intended audience. Here are some of the factors you may wish to consider when designing your own information sheets.

Presentation
An information sheet can sometimes be your first introduction to your potential participants. A poorly presented sheet of A4 paper with a few paragraphs of small text is a poor introduction to your research, regardless of the size and scope of your study.

Structure and Style
Tailor the length of the information sheet to your intended audience - anything more than a double-sided A4 sheet is a lot of information for most of us!
However, as this can be unavoidable, a folded leaflet (A4 or A5) can sometimes be more effective when dealing with a lot of information. We recommend the use of a ‘question and answer’ format so participants are not faced with a huge body of uninterrupted text to plough through.
Remember to provide information in a logical sequence – an information sheet can still have a beginning, middle, and an end!

Also think about the typeface, size of font, and spacing between lines. Although formatting can be used to squeeze information into a space, it can also be altered to help ensure your intended audience can read the information easily. Presenting an excellent participant information sheet is the best way to prove to the committee that you have thought about the ethical issues your study might raise.

**Language**

It is important to think about the language you use to ensure potential participants can understand the information provided. If you know the demographics of your research population it can be helpful to spend some time thinking about how to make the information accessible. *This most likely means avoiding academic language and subject specific terminology and jargon that potential participants may not understand!*

**Piloting information sheets:**

Information sheets are a central component of the process of informed consent and can also influence how successfully participants are recruited to your study. It can be easy to omit pieces of information or to include terminology and language participants may not understand.

Everyone knows someone who isn't an academic, and it will be very useful to pilot your information sheet before it is seen by participants, particularly if you have access to someone who meets the profile of your research population.

Finally, if you will be recruiting participants with varying levels of understanding or participation you should provide them with different information sheets.
Annex II: Designing Consent Forms for Research Participants (see link to Sample Consent Form)

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.

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.

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 either during data collection, or at a later time
- 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.
Annex 3: Data storage and device encryption

This information is provided to help you answer question 4.6.

All personal or identifiable data (including sound files, video files, transcripts, questionnaire responses, participant databases, etc.) should be stored on only one of the following:

- a University of York server in a password-protected folder accessible only to the researcher.
- a university desk-top computer which is password-protected and located in a room which is locked when not in use.
- a shared drive which is password-protected and is located in the departmental technician’s office which is locked when not in use.

Note that lap-tops, unless the machine itself is encrypted, are not options, nor are home computers.

All files on the university server are backed up. Files with personal or identifiable data in them should not be backed up on any other device.

No hard copies or storage devices with personal information must be kept in the researcher’s home after fieldwork is completed. While collecting such data, it must be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room.

In some cases, you may be collecting data from participants' homes. In this case, you may need to store either phone numbers or addresses on mobile devices. Please assure the committee that this information is as anonymised as possible and that it will be deleted when the data collection is completed.