
Designing ethical pedagogic research: example wording

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Informed consent

Participants will be invited to volunteer for the project. Potential participants will be brought together at the start of the research and the researcher will verbally explain the aims of the project, take questions, and distribute the Participant Information Sheet. It will be made clear that participation is voluntary, and that there is no advantage or disadvantage foreseen to participation. Participants will then be invited to sign up for the study by completing a Participant Consent Form, should they wish to.

Direct identification

(a) We will explicitly seek participants' consent (i) to use quotations from them in published work (ii) to attribute quotations to them personally, giving their name, institution and role. Participants will be offered the choice to contribute anonymous quotations if preferred. Prior to publication, participants will be sent the sections of the report which use their words, and invited to check and approve their contribution.

(b) Participants in the focus groups will necessarily be identifiable to others in the same focus group, as they are classmates. However, they will remain in control of how much they choose to disclose, and will be requested to respect all participants' confidentiality. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to withdraw both before and during the focus group without needing to give a reason and this will be highlighted on both the PIS and PCF. All names will be redacted from the transcripts that will form the dataset for analysis.

Avoiding indirect identification

Participants will be informed that information gathered (illustrative quotations from transcripts design studio discussion) may be used in research outputs such as conference presentations and papers. Raw data will not be used for illustrative purposes, and will be pseudo-anonymised. If participants include any information that might allow their identity to be recognised or guessed, this will be redacted prior to analysis.

Pseudoanonymising data

On receipt of the questionnaires, the Co-Investigator (CI) will allocate a unique arbitrary code to each and remove the participants' names from the dataset used for analysis. Only the CI will have access to the document linking between participants' names with their codes. The list of codes and participant names will not be made available to anyone outside the research team, will not be published, and will be stored separately from the questionnaires in a password-protected area to ensure that only the CI can access it during the course of the research.

Withdrawing from the study

(a) Interviewees will be informed via the PIS of their right to withdraw at any point before or during the interview itself, without having to state a reason. Furthermore, they may choose to withdraw their data from the study by notifying the researcher before 15 April, when analysis will begin. After this date it will no longer be possible to withdraw.

(b) Participants in the focus groups will be given the opportunity to withdraw both before and during the focus group. As audio data cannot reliably be attributed to specific individuals, it will not be possible to remove their data from the study after the focus group has taken place. This will be made clear in the Participant Information Sheet.

Recording

Participants will be made aware via the PIS that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. They will be asked on the PCF to give their consent for a recording to be made. It will be made clear on both PIS and PCF that participants can choose to withdraw their data from the study up to two weeks after the date of the recording.

Sensitive topics and emotional wellbeing

(a) The focus throughout the questionnaire will be on students' experience of the selected teaching method and how successful it has been in developing their understanding and confidence. No sensitive topics will be discussed. Participants will remain in control of how much they choose to disclose and the questions are therefore not likely to cause distress to participants.

(b) It is possible that the act of reflecting on their sense of belonging may cause participants to become upset. Participants will be informed via PIS/PCF of their right to stop the interview in the event that they feel uncomfortable, without needing to explain their reasons. Students will receive information about Students Services and the Students' Union, and be directed to this support if appropriate.

Avoiding coercion and the perception of coercion

An asymmetric power relationship is acknowledged to exist between one of the researchers and the participants, as he will be teaching and assessing them as part of the module.

(a) The nature and purpose of the research study will be clearly outlined to participants at the start of the project via a brief information session, supported by a Participant Information Sheet, held at the beginning of the course. This will clearly explain the voluntary nature of the project and the ability to withdraw at any time from any of the phases. It will also emphasise that neither participation nor non-participation will have any impact on students' final grade outcome.

(b) To avoid students feeling uncomfortable or threatened about expressing their opinions in the survey and focus groups, the Principal Investigator (PI) will not be involved in organizing these phases. Instead, the survey administration and the recruitment, management and facilitation of focus groups will be carried out by the co-investigator (CI), who is not a member of the teaching staff within the department and thus has no prior connection with or undue influence over the research participants.

(c) Participants have not been taught by me; however, as first year undergraduate students they may feel uncomfortable to express their experiences of belonging if they perceive me to be an employee of the university or in a position of authority. To mitigate this potential discomfort, participant information (through documentation and reassurances from myself at interview) will make clear that the study is not related to their course and decisions to participate (or not) will not affect their course outcomes in any way.

Fairness of comparative teaching/assessment approaches

Whilst lecture content will be delivered to the students of both cohorts together, course programming and timetabling constraints mean that a separate series of workshops will be provided for each cohort. [COURSE 1] students will join the IBL/TBL programme whilst [COURSE 2] students will continue with their own workshop programme. The pedagogic approach used in each case has been selected and approved by the relevant department as part of the normal course approval process. This facilitates a data-rich comparative analysis of the impact of active learning strategies on the acquisition of research skills and methods.

Reusing course data for research purposes

During the course quantitative data on various aspects of individual students' engagement and learning gain will be collected as part of normal module administration. These data will include:

- scores from individual and team readiness assurance tests administered prior to each TBL group session
- formative and summative test grades, which will be recorded on Canvas as part of normal module administration
- evidence of engagement with learning resources

The analytical tools and methodologies employed are within the scope of our normal routine data collection, and will be fully anonymized before analysis. In this way no individual's performance can be traced to them, and data will be analysed at cohort level only.

Compliance with research integrity standards

The researchers will follow the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research as well as the ethical procedure prescribed by [University].

Gatekeeper permission

We have obtained permission from Prof X, Head of School, to carry out this research with students (please see attached document).