Application 6: How students use Facebook for module selection

**Important note:** This is a real application which has been doctored for the purposes of training. Information has been removed from the application and the application has been anonymised. The UREC does not endorse this application as a model.

The application, shown on the following pages, was discussed at the workshop. A summary of the key points raised by the participants and the UREC follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

- The questionnaire should be included so that the questions can be viewed by the reviewers.
- The myAnnounce email that is proposed to be sent could be included with the application.
- It should be clear whether the data will be used in this project only or for future research as well.
- The information sheet should contain a contact for queries and complaints, mention that ethics approval has been obtained, give participants a right to withdraw from the research and provide assurances of confidentiality.
- The consent form states ‘or to do any of the activities’ – it’s not clear what this means.
- The questionnaire won’t actually be asking for the participants name so the consent form is confusing.
- It should be made clear to participants that the data will be collected with no identifying information attached.
- The questionnaire will be administered on Survey Monkey; the site’s security should be considered.
University Research Ethics Application Form for UGs and PGTs

This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Complete this form if you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure. If you are a member of staff or a postgraduate research student, this is the wrong form.

Your Supervisor decides if ethics approval is required and, if required, which ethics review procedure (e.g. University, NHS, Alternative) applies.

If the University’s procedure applies, your Supervisor decides if your proposed project should be classed as ‘low risk’ or potentially ‘high risk’.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM: PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets/Covering Letters/Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.

Further guidance on how to apply is at:
www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at:
www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval

Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page.

If your supervisor has classed the project as ‘low risk’:
• Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your Supervisor; and
• Sign and date Annex 1 of this form and provide a paper copy to your Supervisor.

Important Note for Supervisors:

Following the ethics review the Supervisor must provide the academic department’s Ethics Administrator with a copy of the ‘low risk’ research ethics application that s/he reviewed and a completed Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form indicating the ethics decision that s/he took in relation to it. The Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form can be downloaded here: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc. The Ethics Administrator reserves the right to consult the Chair of the academic department’s Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) of s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.
If your supervisor has classed the project as potentially ‘high risk’:

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your department’s Ethics Administrator; and
- Ask your Supervisor to sign and date Annex 2 of this form and provide a paper copy of it to your department’s Ethics Administrator.

Ethics Administrators are listed at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’, as shown on the University’s research ethics website at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

A1. Title of Research Project: How students use Facebook for module selection

A2. Name of Student

Name: ***
Email: ***
Department: ***
Telephone: ***

Name of Supervisor: ***

A3. Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: ***
End date: ***

A4. Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

- involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g., young offenders)
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g., blood, tissue) *
- involves testing a medicinal product *
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g., blood, tissue) *
- involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *
- involves investigating a medical device *
- is social care research
- is ESRC funded

* If you have marked boxes marked * then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. The procedure for doing so is entirely by email. Please send an email addressed to insurance@shef.ac.uk and request a copy of the ‘Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form’.
It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

A5. Briefly summarise:
   i. The project’s aims and objectives:
      (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   Students make choices about modules for many different reasons. Some are related personal life situations, some according to their perception of the module or course, or the staff member. In this study, we are assessing how students use Facebook when making choices. We are interested in understanding how much the community that a student connects with on Facebook influences their choices.

   ii. The project’s methodology:
      (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   The study will involve a web-based survey created using Survey Monkey. All undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences will be invited to complete the survey.

   The survey will be created and mounted on Survey Monkey and available from xxx-xxx. The survey will contain three parts: part A will consist of six questions about age, gender, education, etc to create a demographic profile of all those who respond. Part B will contain five questions about education and their job aspirations. These questions are to ascertain whether they have firm career expectations that might influence module selection. Part C will ask questions about how they use Facebook in their personal life and about how they have used Facebook in their academic life. All questions are closed questions.

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to participants?

   The potential for harm or distress is no greater than might be experienced in everyday life.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

   There are no personal safety issues involved with this study; there will be no contact between the researcher and the participants.

   If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.
A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

Potential participants will be undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield.

ii. Approached?

The potential participants will be sent an email via the Announce discussion list by my supervisor ***.

iii. Recruited?

See above

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent

A9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent: How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

The information sheet/consent form will be on the first and second pages of the survey and will describe what will be asked of participants.

Remember to attach your consent form and information sheet (where appropriate)

A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

Each survey response will be associated with an arbitrary number; all responses will be anonymous. Any IP addresses associated with the dataset will be deleted as soon as the file is downloaded from the web.
A11. Will financial/in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No compensation will be provided.

A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

Yes ☐
No ☒

A12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:

How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes
University Research Ethics Application Form - Annex 1 - Student Declaration

(The student completes Annex 1 if the Supervisor has classed the student’s proposed research project as ‘low risk’)

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated, paper copy of this Annex 1 ‘the Student Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title:

How students use Facebook for module selection

In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:

• The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
• The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good
• The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy
• Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
• I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
• I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
• I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
• I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of supervisor:

***

Name of student:

***

Signature of student:

*** Date:***
University Research Ethics Application Form - Annex 2 - Supervisor Declaration

(The Supervisor completes Annex 2 if s/he has classed the student’s proposed research project as potentially ‘high risk’)

The Ethics Administrator needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated, paper copy of this Annex 2 ‘the Supervisor Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title:

In signing this Supervisor Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I will undertake to ensure that the student adheres to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about the student and/or myself on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I and/or the student wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of supervisor:

Name of student:

Signature of supervisor:  

Date:
Information sheet – How students make choices about module selection

Researchers
***
***
***

Purpose of the research
We are trying to understand how students use Facebook when making decisions about the modules they will take in courses.

Who will be participating?
We are inviting undergraduate students enrolled on courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield to participate in a web-based survey.

What will you be asked to do?
We will ask you to respond to a series of questions in three parts:
A contains six questions about age, gender, education, etc to create a demographic profile of all those who respond.
B contains five questions about your education and job goals.
C contains six questions about how you use Facebook if your personal and academic life.
The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

What are the potential risks of participating?
The risks of participating are the same as those experienced in everyday life.

What data will we collect?
We are only collecting your responses to the survey questions.

What will you do with the data?
The data will be stored on my computer any only analysed for my undergraduate project. The data will be deleted after my report has been marked.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The results of the study will be included in my undergraduate project report.
Consent form

I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences by simply closing the browser on my computer.

I understand that I may decline to answer any particular questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at any time, all of my data will be purged.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.

I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.

I agree to take part in the research project as described above.