

Department of Music, University College Cork

RESEARCH ETHICS SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET, CONSENT FORMS & REVIEW FORM

Initial Considerations

All those whom you approach in your research should be treated with respect. Their pre-existing rights to ownership of and participation in their own musical expressions and other intellectual property should not be compromised by any part of your research process. Material shared with you privately must be kept out of wider circulation. You should not place yourself or others at risk through your research conduct. Nor should you waste the time, expertise or goodwill of others with unready efforts.

For reasons like these, research with live people involves contact and negotiation where you ascertain that those with whom you seek to work are able to participate freely, and where they have the opportunity to consider your research and its potential impacts upon them prior to deciding whether or not to participate. You should also discuss their needs at this stage, but you should not incentivise research, e.g., through interview fees, to the extent that results risk becoming skewed by people's desire to gain that reward through their participation.

Information Sheets and Consent Forms

When contacting potential participants, you should use language they can understand. In many situations, an Information Sheet is distributed to provide potential participants with an outline of the research project. A Consent Form is used to record permissions granted. In situations where written documentation is less suitable, you may prefer to make a sound or video recording of your discussion with each potential research subject over permission.

Sample Information Sheets and Consent Forms follow: you should design your own but are welcome to adopt these as a template. You may need a different format depending on the methodology you are using. If you will need contact details for returning materials or publications to participants, this may be the place to record them.

You should show your draft Information Sheet and Consent Form to your tutor prior to submitting them to the Department Research Committee as part of an Ethics Application. You should keep all permission sheets until the end of research and until any subsequent publications have come out. Publishers sometimes check these prior to issuing a contract.

Respecting Privacy vs. Acknowledgement Due

Much research with human subjects investigates potentially private or contentious matters and so results in personal information on such topics as an individual's political values, sexuality or medical history. In these cases, it is usual to aggregate responses quantitatively and/or to mention individual cases only after anonymisation. Data that identifies individuals should be stored safely and

confidentiality maintained. Such data may be shredded when the study is complete. Some Music research is equally sensitive and may be best worked on in line with the same standards.

However, in other studies, for instance biographical interviews with prominent musicians or the video documentation of public festivities, it can be quite inappropriate or impractical to use anonymisation. More widely, musicians deserve acknowledgement for their expertise. Any music examples they have provided remain their intellectual property, and so should be cited as such in your study and any resulting publications.

When a study includes elements of both documenting public-oriented performance and analysing personally sensitive information, the researcher needs to plan especially clearly up front how to handle the dual needs of respecting privacy versus giving due acknowledgement.

Further Considerations

Particularly obviously in online research situations, the researcher may not be able to ensure that all participants meet such participation requirements as age or level of linguistic understanding. It may also be impractical to gather Consent Forms with anything other than an electronic signature. The researcher should plan such research with a view to minimising the potential for negative impact on the research and on participants alike of problems that might arise.

Some interview recordings are likely to have long-term value beyond the study itself but are unlikely to be published in full. In these instances, it may be appropriate to place the resulting recordings in an archive, library or museum. The researcher should plan this in advance taking advice from archivists as necessary. Archiving plans need to be communicated with and acceptable to those participating in the study.

Developments in educational technology mean we now put more of our work online than ever before, whether in institutional thesis repositories or via our personal websites. This further blurs the distinction between submitting a thesis or report internally and publishing it. The researcher should consider this aspect widely and in advance, not least with regard to the inclusion of music recordings, which may raise issues related to copyright.

Review Process

You should plan your research to allow time to plan and for review of its ethical considerations.

Ask your course tutor or supervisor to check your application. Then, when you are ready for review, complete an Ethics Review Form. Attach your Information Sheet and Consent Form. Send these to the current chair of the Departmental Research Committee who will arrange review.

Sample Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study. As part of the requirements for my BA [BMus...] degree at University College Cork, I am researching...

[Brief: 1-2 sentences on your main question. Give a sense of the scale and scope of the project.]

What will the study involve? The study involves...

[Indicate the procedure and time commitment expected of a participant, giving the simplest possible explanation and avoiding jargon and unnecessary detail.]

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because... [Explain briefly why they are specifically or generally suitable to provide data for your study].

Do you have to take part? Participation is voluntary... [Explain about signing a consent form. Ideally they get to keep the information sheet and a copy of the consent form. They should be told that they have the option of withdrawing before the study commences (even if they have agreed to participate) or discontinuing after the research has begun. Where data are identifiable (e.g. from interviews yielding qualitative data), it's useful to allow for afterthoughts by allowing them the option of withdrawing within two weeks of participation and ask to have their data destroyed. Explain all this in writing.]

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential/ Will due acknowledgement be given [Explain how you'll handle the question of people's identities in relation to their participation in your research. Where relevant, you might offer *anonymity* rather than confidentiality but in other cases it is more fitting to acknowledge people's identities, for instance as performers and composers. Examples:] I will make every effort to ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be anonymous. Or: I would like to give due acknowledgement and will attribute content to you unless you specify that you would prefer to participate anonymously.

What will happen to the information which you give? [Kept confidential from third parties (including workers' superiors, if relevant); will it be destroyed after a period? Will it be placed in an archive? For example:] The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed. Or: interview recordings will be offered to ... Sound Archive. [Fill in the name.]

What will happen to the results? [For example:] The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal or presented in educational or research settings.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part & What if there's a problem? [If you think there are none, say so. Keep in mind that people have strong views on many music-related topics. For example:] I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. I will be happy to discuss with you how you found the experience, and we can pause or discontinue the research at any time. You do not need to give a reason.

Who has reviewed this study? [Departmental Ethics Committee, funding agency, for example:] Approval must be given by the Department of Music before studies like this can take place.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me: [Name, mobile number—it may be unwise to offer your personal phone number to strangers, email address—use your UCC email for this, not a personal email. In some cases, it may be better to give your supervisor's name and office contact details than your own.]

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf. [Two samples are provided: choose either or create one that better fits your research.]

[Keep everything on a single page, but don't make the font size too small – say, not less than size 12. This text is Calibri 9 – too small for your purposes. Adjust the size of the margins if necessary.]

Consent Form (Anonymous Version)

[title of research project]

I.....agree to participate in this research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating. I do not need to give a reason.

I give permission for my interview to be recorded.

I understand that every effort will be undertaken to ensure anonymity will be ensured in the writing up and any other project outputs.

If I give permission below, disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the study and any subsequent publications or presentations:

Yes No (Please tick one box)

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

[Researcher's use] Code Number of Associated Recording(s).....

Signed.....

Date.....

Consent Form (Recognised Name Version)

[title of research project]

I.....agree to participate in this research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating. I do not need to give a reason.

I give permission for my performance and interview to be recorded.

If I give permission below, performance and interview recordings and their transcriptions may be included in the study and any subsequent publications or presentations:

Yes No (Please tick one box)

I understand that due acknowledgement will be given in the final study and any subsequent publications or presentations for all material that represents my own intellectual property (compositions, improvisations, performances, etc.).

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use this material within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

[Researcher's use] Code Number of Associated Recording(s).....

Signed.....

Date.....

ETHICS REVIEW FORM
Department of Music, UCC

1. Principal Investigator or Supervisor:	
2. Student (if student project):	
3. Project Title:	
4. Project Duration:	

The applicant completes 1-4, attaches the Information Sheet and Consent Form, and forwards these materials to the chair of the Departmental Research Committee.

5. I confirm that, in my judgment, the project is potentially:	
Low risk	High risk
Additional comments on decision, as required:	

Applications judged 'High risk' should be returned to the applicant at this stage. The applicant should resubmit the proposal to the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

6. I confirm that, in my judgment, the application should:			
Be approved:	Be approved with <i>suggested</i> amendments in '6' below:	and/or	Be approved providing <i>requirements</i> specified in '8' below are met:
			NOT be approved for the reason(s) given in '8' below:

7. Approved with the following suggested, optional amendments (i.e. it is left to the discretion of the applicant whether or not to accept the amendments and, if accepted, the ethics reviewers do not need to see the amendments):

8. Approved providing the following, compulsory requirements are met (i.e. the ethics reviewers need to see the required changes):

9. Not approved for the following reason(s):

10. Signature of Reviewer:	Date of Review:
By signing, the reviewer confirms that she or he has no conflict of interest with the project application	

Return one copy to the Principal Investigator. Attach a second copy to the original application materials, which should be kept on file in the Departmental Office. Applications and Review forms can be shredded 3 years after completion of the research project.