TITLE: RESEARCH ETHICS ADVISORY POLICY

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Approved By	Academic Council	**Date Approved**	1 November 2017
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Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)		**Owner**	
Research Ethics Advisory Committee—Policy and Procedures (Quality Assurance Handbook, 2011).		Office of the Registrar	

1. Purpose of Policy

Research is at the core of all teaching and learning in third-level institutions. Significantly, at the core of all research are the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. The purpose of this Policy rests in the fact that given the significance of ethics in research, all research involving humans and animals is now guided by legislation and policies such as *The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* which is informed by Section 8.09 of the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2010). The APA in turn informs and guides the ethical principles of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI, 2016), the *British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct* (BPS, 2016), the Department of Health Service Executive (HSE, 2016), and the current *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in the Care and Use of Animal*s (BPS, 2016).

Moreover, research concerned with the study of individuals under the age of eighteen should always be guided by *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) which provides national guidance for the protection and welfare of children in Ireland. To this effect, all involved in the study of individuals under the age of eighteen years, or adults deemed as vulnerable (i.e., members of a self-help group, prison populations, intellectually challenged persons) should follow the *Garda Vetting Policy* of Carlow College. It is also important that all researchers make themselves aware of the *Data Protection Legislation* and the *Data Protection Policy* at Carlow College St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College)

The Research Ethics Advisory Committee (REAC) of Carlow College is a committee concerned with the protection of humans and animals involved in research projects designed and carried out by external researchers, staff and/or learners of Carlow College. This may include surveys, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups to name but a few. It is mandatory that all research conducted in Carlow College or by Carlow College staff, external researchers, or learners that involve humans or animals is ethically reviewed and approved by REAC.

2. Definitions

Ethics: moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.

Vulnerable persons: a person, other than a child who: is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia; has an intellectual disability; is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age; or has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Research: the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

3. Scope of Policy

It is the responsibility of dissertation supervisors to point out to undergraduate and postgraduate learners the Procedures for Research Ethics Advisory Committee (Appendix 2). These guidelines are expected to be adhered to by all learners during their research.

External researchers or staff who wish to conduct research involving staff or learners from Carlow College must have ethical approval from their own institution which is recognised by current American and/or European societies and which matches the guidelines of REAC at Carlow College.

4. Policy Statement

REAC takes the view that ethical conduct in research is a shared responsibility. There is, therefore, an onus on all individuals involved in research projects in Carlow College to familiarise themselves with the appropriate ethical guidelines, policies and procedures laid down by their disciplinary and/or professional body and to ensure that these are followed. Particular attention must be paid to any research involving human and/or animal participants.

As such, it is mandatory that at undergraduate and postgraduate level, learners will address the ethical implications of their research with human/animal participants as part of the written research proposal submitted to their dissertation supervisor (see Appendix 1: *Ethics Checklist for* Learners). The dissertation supervisor is responsible for submitting the completed *Checklist* to the Chair of REAC by the first working day in November (see Appendix 2: *Procedures of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee*). Dissertation supervisors will also ensure that learners engaged in primary research are administered a copy of the *Procedures of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee* (Appendix 2) and that researchers use the templates provided for obtaining *Participant Consent* (Appendix 4) and/or *Gatekeeper/Agency Consent* (Appendix 5).

The purpose of the *Research Ethics Approval Policy* is to:

1. Promote the systematic and effective development of ethical research in Carlow College;
2. To guide and support learners and dissertation supervisors in matters related to ethical research, and to make recommendations on these matters to the Academic Council;
3. To support learners and staff in their research activities
4. To ensure REAC remains effective and responsive to user needs;

5. To remain available to staff and learners in relation to advising and guiding ethical research;
6. To maintain systematic data on current and ongoing research projects within the College.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair of REAC is responsible for distributing eight documents to all dissertation supervisors, namely:

Appendix 1. *Ethics Checklist for Learners*

Appendix 2. *Procedures for Research Ethics Advisory Committee*

Appendix 3. *Participant Information Sheet Template*

Appendix 4. *Participant Consent Form Template*

Appendix 5. *Gatekeeper/Agency Information Sheet and Consent Form*

Appendix 6. *Lone Researcher Guidelines*

Appendix 7. *Guidelines for Reporting an Adverse Incident during Research Projects*

Appendix 8. *Handling Complaints Regarding Research Misconduct*

S/he is further responsible for issuing reminder emails to all dissertation supervisors for the submission of completed *Ethics Checklists for Learners* and other relevant documentation as per Appendices 1-8 listed previously.

The Chair of REAC will ensure that external researchers and/or staff conducting studies at Carlow College have submitted documentation stating they have obtained ethical approval from their particular institution. If further documentation or clarification is required, the Chair is responsible for obtaining same prior to the commencement of any study at Carlow College. The Chair is responsible for communicating decision about the conduct of research within Carlow College to external researchers.

The Chair of REAC is responsible for compiling an annual report of REAC activities for Academic Council.

Dissertation supervisors are responsible for distributing the *Ethics Checklist for* Learners to their learner cohort. They are also responsible for the collection of the *Checklist* and the return of these to the Chair of REAC. Dissertation supervisors will advise learners on the viability of their research in the first instance, and will keep learners informed of communications between REAC and the supervisor regarding any issues that may arise.

REAC committee members are responsible for their attendance at four meetings annually and the decision-making that may arise regarding the support of a learner whose research that fall outside the typical ethical format.

The Learner/Researcher is responsible for their adherence to the *Research Ethics Approval Policy* and guidelines set down within.

6. Associated Documentation

Appendix 1: *Ethics Checklist for Learners/ Researchers*

Appendix 2: *Procedures of Research Ethics Advisory Committee*

Appendix 3. *Participant Information Sheet Template*

Appendix 4. *Participant Consent Form Template*

Appendix 5. *Gatekeeper/Agency Information Sheet and Consent Form*

Appendix 6. *Lone Researcher Guidelines*

Appendix 7. *Guidelines for Reporting an Adverse Incident during Research Projects*

Appendix 8. *Handling Complaints Regarding Research Misconduct*

7. Referenced Carlow College Policies

Data Protection Policy

Garda Vetting Policy

Records Management Policy

8. Monitoring and Review

The Policy will be subject to continuous assessment and evaluation. The Policy will be formally reviewed on an annual basis by REAC and any changes will be approved by Academic Council.

Appendix 1: Ethics Checklist for Learners

ETHICS CHECKLIST FOR LEARNERS/RESEARCHERS

This form is intended as an initial checklist for s proposing to undertake research involving human or animal participants.

Learner/Researcher Name	
Learner ID Number	
Course Name	
Supervisor Name	
Dissertation Title	

Checklist

	YES	**NO**
1. Are any of your proposed participants vulnerable or unable to provide informed consent (e.g., individuals under the age of eighteen years, members of a self-help group, prison populations, intellectually challenged persons)?		
2. Will your proposed research require the cooperation of a gatekeeper* for initial access to participants? (e.g., learners at a school, residents of a nursing home)		
3. Will your proposed research involve collection of data relating to sensitive topics? (e.g., sexual activity, drug use, suicide, abuse or discrimination)		
4. Are pain or discomfort likely to result from your proposed research?		
5. Could your topic induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in daily life?		
6. Does your proposed research involve deception?		
7. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your proposed research without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g., covert observations of people)		

	YES	NO
8. Will your proposed research involve the gathering of data about unlawful activity?		
9. Does your proposed research involve access to, or the collection of, sensitive/confidential data from other organisations?		
10. Will your proposed research involve prolonged or repetitive testing of individuals or groups?		
11. Will your research fail to meet the guidelines of the *Data Protection Legislation?*		

If you have answered YES to any of the above questions, please make contact with your dissertation supervisor who will assist you further in developing appropriate safeguards to continue with your research project.

Please attach any survey/interview questions, schedules you propose using for your research.

Please attach letters seeking consent (Appendix 3 and 4) to work with external organisations.

Signed:

Date:

Office Use Only

REAC ref number:

Decision:

* Gatekeeping is the process of allowing or denying another person access to someone or something (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002).

Appendix 2: Procedure for Research Ethics Advisory Committee

PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH ETHICS ADVISORY COMMITEE

This form is intended as an informative list of procedures carried out by REAC for staff and s proposing to undertake research involving <u>human or animal</u> participants.

Overview:

The academic year runs between September and May of each year. Research projects in Stage IV in some of the degree programmes (Applied Social Studies, Community & Citizenship, Masters in Therapeutic Child Care) begin by mid-to-late September. Learners enrolled on the English & History and Humanities programmes submit their research proposals in Stage III however. For the former cohort, those learners engaged in collecting primary data (surveying or interviewing participants) are usually ready to do so in late January-early February whereas the latter groups are ready to do so in September of their Stage IV entry. All dissertations are typically submitted by mid-April of the academic year. To accommodate the collection of the *Ethics Checklist for* Learners (Appendix 1) by the Research Ethics Advisory Committee (REAC), and to support learners with ethical procedures, four meetings will be held during the academic year. A preliminary meeting will occur in early September to discuss the year ahead. A second meeting will be held in mid-November to process the completed *Ethics Checklist for Learners* and any other supporting documentation and to discuss any learners in need of further support with their research. The third meeting will coincide with learners' data collection time periods, in February, with a final formal meeting to discuss issues arising during the academic year being held in April. The April meeting will also deal with Stage III English & History and Humanities learners submitting research proposals for the following year. Meetings outside of these time frames can be called should the need occur.

In early September, REAC will hold a preliminary meeting to plan for the year ahead and to ensure all relevant documentation is ready to disseminate College wide.

Early September (April for English & History/Humanities programmes) of each year will see staff engaged in dissertation supervision being furnished with documents pertaining to Appendix 1-8.

By mid-September, relevant dissertation supervisors will ensure that each engaged in any dissertation research has this documentation in either hard or electronic formats.

In the last week of October, the Chair of REAC will issue a reminder to all dissertation supervisors that all completed documents pertaining to Appendix 1-8 need to be submitted by the first week in November.

By the first week in November, all completed documents pertaining to Appendix 1-8 will have been returned to supervisors prior to the commencing any research.

In Mid-November REAC will hold their second meeting of the year to discuss the submitted *documents pertaining to Appendix 1-8* and to consider ways to support anyone ticked YES to any of the 11 statements on their submitted Ethics Checklist for Learners (Appendix 1).

Approved *Ethics Checklist for Learners / Researchers* will be returned to dissertation supervisors in a five-day working week via the Chair.

In mid-to-late November, the Chair will arrange meetings with any learners and/or their dissertation supervisors to discuss any proposed research that is outside of the typical ethical format.

Decisions on research projects that are outside the typical ethical format will be made within a ten-day working week at most.

All learners should be ready to commence data collection by early February.

In February, the third meeting of REAC will be held.

In April, dissertations are typically submitted and the fourth and final formal REAC meeting will take place. This meeting will also consider the documents pertaining to Appendix 1-8 obtained from Stage III learners enrolled on the English & History/Humanities programmes. The Chair will arrange meetings with any English & History/Humanities learners and/or their dissertation supervisors to discuss any proposed research that is outside of the typical ethical format. Decisions on research projects that are outside the typical ethical format will be made within a ten-day working week at most.

External Research and Carlow College:

Where research ethics approval has been obtained from an external research ethics committee a copy of the approval must be submitted to the REAC prior to the commencement of the study.

REAC might request further documentation or clarification to inform their deliberations.

Researchers own their own research data but should be aware that any data stored on Carlow College servers may be subject to College policy under Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection legislation.

If REAC is unwilling to grant approval, then the research cannot proceed.

Shared Responsibility:

Before seeking ethics approval researchers, learners and academic supervisors should review the code of ethics that will govern their particular research project. They should highlight the pertinent issues in relation to their own study (for example, www.psihq.ie for psychological studies). When completing their Research Ethics Approval Application all researchers should:

1. Identify the actual and potential ethical issues and risks in their research.
2. Offer an account of how ethical issues and risks will be addressed in the study.
3. Formulate procedures for dealing with these issues, in consultation with their academic supervisor or principal investigator.

During the subsequent research project researchers have a responsibility to:

1. Implement the procedures agreed by REAC.
2. Attend to ethical issues on an ongoing basis, including seeking feedback from participants.
3. Review and update their ethical procedures and if necessary, to return to REAC.

All supervisors and researchers at Carlow College are expected to familiarise themselves with the following:

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In relation to confidentiality and anonymity REAC takes the view that under normal circumstances the learner will guarantee confidentiality to all participants in their research. This means that the learner will do everything they can to protect their privacy and ensure that it will not be possible for third parties to trace any information they provide to the learner back to the participant (without their permission). This guarantee of confidentially and anonymity also extends to people whom the participant may talk about in interview.

Prior to the interview a learner should discuss the limits of confidentiality with the participant i.e. the circumstances under which the learner may have to reveal what the participant tells them without their permission. This might occur if the learner has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed.

Learners should also clearly explain to participants that non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process. A study which requires either digital or photographic recordings of participants must include in the research ethics approval application a justification and documentation of the methods by which the statutory provisions and research practice guidelines will be met. In exceptional circumstances the nature of the research may mean that it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality to your participants (e.g. very rare and high profile events, interviews with public figures). In such circumstances it is very important that participants are made aware of this prior to the interview and that information sheets and consent forms are adjusted accordingly.

Data retention, protection and destruction

Research data in this instance refers to any and all recorded descriptive, numerical, or visual material collected and used in the conduct of research, irrespective of medium. It may include physical, and electronic records, digital images, microfilm, microfiche, audiotape, videotape, and photographs. Research data may be augmented by objects, specimens, and samples.

The researcher owns their own research data but should be aware that data generated via Carlow College servers may come under intellectual property and may be subject to FOI and Data Protection via Carlow College policies and procedures.

In all cases involving human subjects, consent must be obtained from all participants in the study for the specific data retention / storage / destruction policy involved in that specific study.

Typically, at undergraduate level, data must be destroyed two years after the completion of the relevant course, unless a learner and supervisor have arranged jointly to retain it for publication purposes. All raw data must be kept until exam boards confirm a learner's results for a dissertation. Anonymised interview transcripts are to be retained for two years from the date of the exam board. If a learner requires an extension to retain data beyond two years then they must seek the approval of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee.

For external researchers and staff research projects, they may plan to keep their data for longer periods, in consultation with their supervisors or research teams. The principle must be adhered to that this is done with clear and informed consent from all participants in the study. This requires an explicit data retention / storage / destruction policy to be developed for each individual Research Ethics Committee application and to be included in all participant and agency information sheets and consent forms. They will also need to inform participants of their rights to access their personal data at any time (under Freedom of Information Acts and Data Protection Legislation).

The protection of research data is the responsibility of the researcher. It is advised that they consider methods to encrypt, use password protected files, anonymization, and ensure the safe use of data on portable devices such as memory sticks, USB etc.

The commitment of a researcher or learner carrying out research under the auspices of Carlow College, St Patricks, is to comply with the policies as set out by the College and additional compliance with the policies of the relevant body of the organization wherein any external research is conducted. This is the responsibility of the researcher.

Limitation of risk

REAC acknowledges that some level of discomfort, stress or embarrassment and risk of harm to both participants and researchers may be unavoidable, but the researcher is expected to show that they have done everything possible to minimise such risk and discomfort. The researcher must also ensure that participants have been made fully aware of any potential risks or discomforts in advance so that they can make properly informed consent.

Researchers are also obliged to limit the risk of physical and psychological harm to themselves as much as possible – in the research context taking risks is not a personal decision. This includes taking proper precautions for their physical safety. Although it is not part of the ethical approval process for research with non-vulnerable populations and non-sensitive topics, researchers should be aware that research is by its nature intrusive and may uncover distressing material in completely unexpected ways. For their own benefit and the benefit of their participants it is recommended that all researchers familiarize themselves with distress protocols typically used in researching sensitive topics. See for example:

Draucker C. B., Martsolf, D. S. and Poole, C. (2009) *Developing Distress Protocols for research on Sensitive Topic*s. Archives of Psychiatric Nursing 23 (5), pp. 343-350.

McCosker, H. Barnard, A. Gerber, R. (2001). *Undertaking Sensitive Research: Issues and Strategies for Meeting the Safety Needs of All*. Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 2(1).

Decision Making:

Decisions will be based on a majority decision with the Chair having the casting vote.

REAC will endeavour to respond within seven to fourteen days following the meeting and not more than one month later.

Members of REAC will withdraw from deliberations when their own applications are discussed and will play no part in the decision-making process.

Members of REAC will withdraw from deliberations on appeals when they have been passed on to the Office of the Registrar and will play no part in that decision-making process.

Appendix 3. Participant Information sheet template

The following is a suggested template for participant information sheets. You may adjust and populate the template to suit your project and intended audience. Use clear, simple English at all times and avoid abbreviations and acronyms. This template is designed primarily for those doing qualitative interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non–sensitive topics. You will need more adjustment and supervision if working with focus groups or structured interviews. If conducting research with vulnerable populations and / or sensitive topics, please see Research Ethics Advisory Committee (REAC) for further details. If you intend to publish your research you should also:

- Use the correct data retention policy as per the Research Ethics Advisory Committee Procedures.
- Declare any funding for your research and/or conflict of interest.
- Outline provisions for checking direct quotations with participants to ensure that they reflect accurately what the participant said and are used in their proper context.
- External researchers and/or Carlow College Staff should provide information sheets and consent forms on headed paper from the most appropriate institution.

Participant Information Sheet Template

[TITLE OF THE STUDY]:

The title should be clear, self-explanatory and consistent across all documents referring to the study.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

Explain who you are and why you are doing this study. Explain the overall aim of the study. When describing the study take care to be as neutral as possible and avoid suggesting any bias about what you expect the outcomes from the research to be. If the research is being undertaken as part of a course of study state what qualification will result from the process.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Explain what taking part in the research will involve including a list of topics that you will discuss and the expected location and duration of participation. If you plan to use audio or video recording discuss that also.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

Explain why you have selected this particular individual to take part in your research and how you came to select them.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Explain that participation is completely voluntary and that the person has the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time prior to dissertation submission without any consequence whatsoever.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

Give a frank and realistic assessment of the possible benefits of the research – do not oversell what the research will achieve. Consider any possible physical or psychological harm that may come to a participant as a result of participating in the research and what you will do should such a situation arise.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Explain what steps you will take to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant and any individuals they talk about. Outline the situations in which you may have to break confidentiality: if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed. You should also make it clear that non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio or video recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Explain that the interview will be recorded and outline the arrangements for storing the research data (where it will be stored, security arrangements, who will have access). For learners undertaking research who have no intention of subsequently publishing their research the relevant paragraph should read: 'Signed consent forms and original audio or video recordings will be retained in [specify location, security arrangements and who has access to data] until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.'

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

Outline fully and realistically your plans for the dissemination of the final research product including conferences, publications and teaching use. If your plans for the research only consist in submitting your dissertation, then simply state this.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Provide the name, affiliation and contact details of all researchers involved as well as supervisor details where relevant.

[THANK YOU]

Appendix 4. Participant Consent Form Template

This template is designed primarily for those doing qualitative interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non–sensitive topics. The form would be different in the case of focus groups or quantitative research. If conducting research with vulnerable populations and / or sensitive topics, please see Research Ethics Advisory Committee for further details. The points listed on the template below are for illustration only. You may alter the wording to suit your project as you see fit.

A consent form is not simply about a person giving you permission to involve them in research, it is an agreement between the researcher and the research participant outlining the roles and responsibilities they are taking towards one another throughout the whole of the research process. The researcher should retain one copy of the consent form signed by both themselves and the participant. The participant should also be given a copy of the consent form as a record of what they have signed up to. Even if a person has signed a consent form consent should still be re-established at the point of doing the interview.

Participant Consent Form Template

[Title of project]

Consent to take part in research

- I……………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

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

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves…….*[outline briefly in simple terms what participation in your research will involve]*.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated within the limits of confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and potentially disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in…*[list all forum in which you plan to use the data from the interview: dissertation, conference presentation, published papers etc.]*.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio and video recordings will be retained in *[specify location, security arrangements and who has access to data] until [specific relevant period – for learners this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation]*.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for *[specific relevant period – for learners this will be two years from the date of the exam board]*.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. *[Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant)]*.

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher: ______________________________

Signature of participant: ______________________________

Date: ________________________________

Appendix 5. Gatekeeper / Agency Information Sheet and Consent form

Generally speaking, you can provide a combined information sheet and consent form for gatekeepers / agencies. The following is a suggested template for a Gatekeeper or Agency information sheet / consent form. You may adjust and populate the template to suit your project in conjunction with your dissertation supervisor. If the role of the gatekeeper or agency is more involved the information sheet and consent form will need to reflect this. The information sheet and consent form for gatekeepers / agencies can take the form of a letter if that is more convenient. This template is designed primarily for those doing qualitative interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non–sensitive topics.

Gatekeeper / Agency Information Sheet and Consent Form Template

[TITLE OF THE STUDY]:

The title should be clear, self-explanatory and consistent across all documents referring to the study.

I would like to invite you to assist me in conducting a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you and for the participants. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to facilitate this research.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

Explain who you are and why you are doing this study. Explain the overall aim of the study. When describing the study take care to be as neutral as possible and avoid suggesting any bias about what you expect the outcomes from the research to be. If the research is being undertaken as part of a course of study state what qualification will result from the process.

WHAT I NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE WITH

Explain exactly what it is you want the gatekeeper to do: how many participants? How will they be selected? Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Who will have access to database information? Clarify that the gatekeeper role is simply one of distributing information and that interested participants should contact the researcher directly, not the gatekeeper. Also clarify any other role you expect the gatekeeper to have e.g. distributing information sheets.

WHAT TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE?

Explain what taking part in the research will involve including a list of topics that you will discuss with research participants and the expected duration of participation. Clarify that participation is voluntary and outline any possible risks and benefits to taking part.

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO DATA FROM RESEARCH?

Explain the steps you are taking to ensure that participants' data will be confidential and anonymous and clarify that no one but yourself (and your academic supervisor) will have access to the data. Also outline the circumstances in which you will be obliged to break confidentiality and the courses of action you might take in such circumstances.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

Outline fully and realistically your plans for the dissemination of the final research product including conferences, publications and teaching use. If your plans for the research only consist in submitting your dissertation, then simply state this.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Provide the name, affiliation and contact details of all researchers involved as well as supervisor details where relevant.

[THANK YOU]

NOTE: In the case of repeat interviewing or data collection, consent need to be renewed at each stage.

The time the person is given to consider participation will vary between studies depending on the nature of the topic, what participation involves, the capacity of the participant and so on. While it might be acceptable to gain quick consent for a short questionnaire participation in a lengthy series of biographical interviews would require a much longer period of consideration. What is appropriate needs to be thought through for each study. Typically, a qualitative interview on a non-sensitive topic with a person who is not from non-vulnerable population would involve a period of consideration somewhere between 24 hours and one week depending on the population and topic.

Appendix 6. Lone Researcher Guidelines

The following document provides guidelines for researchers (staff and students) who are working alone or in small teams. They are intended to provide guidance to researchers 'in the field', irrespective of whether they are working on independent research projects or externally funded ones.

It is your responsibility to ensure that a colleague or 'buddy' is aware of the details of your visit and has agreed to monitor during the visit and when the visit is completed. Ensure that your nominated colleague is available by phone and contactable by you for the duration of your visit. Researchers should follow these guidelines and to use their professional judgement and common sense at all times. **Your safety is the primary concern, which should be placed above completion of research tasks.**

Good practice for lone researchers

- Maintain a schedule of visits as well as a personal diary recording fieldwork. If you are a student, provide your supervisor with this schedule in advance of site visits. For members of staff, ensure a colleague knows where you are working.

- Talk through how to conduct home visits with your research supervisor (for students) or a more experienced member of staff (for academics). Ask a colleague to accompany you if you feel at all uneasy about conducting a research visit on your own.

- Obtain information about where you are visiting before the visit. For instance, ask how many people will be at the visit and where you can park your car/find the nearest public transport.

- If awkward or potentially threatening situation arises, this should be reported to your dissertation Supervisor and/or to the Chair of REAC as soon as possible. On return from the visit, provide all relevant information, (e.g. if you felt at risk or if there was an incident). This should be formally recorded and reviewed with the Chair of REAC to ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken and to minimise any risk in subsequent visits.

- Make (and keep) pre-arranged appointments. Notify the participant if you cannot keep them. Share this schedule with your supervisor/a colleague. Try to arrange research site visits during daylight hours whenever possible. During winter months, weekend visits may be more suitable than evening appointments.

- Consider the purpose of the visit. Does it pose a higher than usual potential of bringing about a dangerous response e.g. an interview in connection with emotional matters? If so, consider asking a colleague to accompany you or arrange to interview the person in a public place such as a coffee shop.

- If, for any reason, you are concerned for your personal safety once you arrive at your appointment venue, then do simply cancel your appointment and leave the research site. On return to the office, make alternative arrangements – for instance having a member of staff experienced in working on their own accompany you.

General guidelines

- Ensure that you have your mobile phone with you at all times. Make sure it is fully charged when you are doing fieldwork, bring a charger with you.

- Save the relevant security and emergency numbers (e.g. local Garda Offices) in your phone.
- Alert a named colleague or 'buddy' when your work involves you working alone, in vulnerable situations or undertaking home visits, so that an effective process is put in place to ensure your safety.
- When conducting research away from your own College, carry your College identity card (with photograph).
- Ensure you have a map of the area you are working in, plan your route in advance.
- Consider carrying a personal alarm (to be kept in an accessible place) to attract attention in an emergency
- Reduce the number of money and valuables you carry, avoid wearing expensive jewellery or watches.
- If an item is grabbed – let go of it!
- Avoid travelling by foot if feeling vulnerable. Use public transport, private car or travel by registered taxi
- In multi-storey buildings, think about safety when choosing lifts or staircases.
- Let research participant's interviewee know that you have a schedule and that others know where you are. This may involve arranging for a colleague or taxi to collect you, or arranging for someone to call you at a designated time.
- Leave your mobile phone switched on in silent mode, even during interviews
- Assess the layout and the quickest way out of a research site. If interviewing in a private dwelling, stay in the communal rooms.

When using your own car for travel

- With your nominated colleague/buddy, share the make, model, colour and registration of the car you will be driving and the route you will be taking.
- Ensure you have adequate breakdown service.
- Ensure that car users have the appropriate level of insurance cover.
- Drivers should travel with doors locked and windows closed. If windows are open, handbags and briefcases should be kept out of sight.
- At night, the car should be parked in a well-lit and busy place. Multi-storey parks, or car parks where the car and the user will not be easily visible, should be avoided.
- If a driver thinks they are being followed, they should keep driving until they reach a busy area - Garda station or a garage, etc.
- Staff should avoid taking research participants as passengers.

During a home visit

- Your safety is the primary concern, which should be placed above completion of research tasks.
- Do not enter someone's home if you don't feel comfortable or safe. If you feel uncomfortable while in a person's home, you should take steps to leave immediately.
- Do not enter a house if the person you have arranged to see is not there. Be aware of, and maintain, personal safety at all times during visits.
- Always explain your research role clearly and the conditions of confidentiality.
- If the participant is anxious, consider encouraging them to have a carer/friend within sight/hearing.
- When visiting people's homes, try to let them lead the way. Avoid being the first to go into any room. Be extra careful when alone with participants e.g. fetching something from a handbag, comforting participants.
- You should always make sure that the exit from the room is clear.
- If you are in any doubt about the behaviour of animals in the home, ask for it/them to be locked away while you are visiting.
- Never undertake an interview or assessment in the bedroom.
- Do not give your personal telephone number or address to clients.
- You should not interview anyone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- A professional and friendly attitude should be adopted but over-familiarity must be avoided.
- Remember that the interviewee may also feel anxious about the interview and your visit. You should bear this in mind whilst also ensuring your own safety.
- Be alert for signs of threatening behaviour and danger, e.g. raised voice, rapid speech and babbling indicate rising tension; Changes in voice or body language as the conversation progresses may suggest anger, frustration or impending violent behaviour, e.g. flushed face, fidgeting, pointing, folded arms.
- Keep your distance. Each of us has a personal space, which we defend when we feel it is being invaded.

Appendix 7: Guidelines for Reporting an Adverse Incident During Research Projects

An Adverse Event is an event that occurs during the course of a research protocol that either causes physical or psychological harm, or increases the risk of physical or psychological harm, or results in a loss of privacy and/or confidentiality to a research participant or others (such as family members).

An Anticipated Adverse Event is one that is reasonably expected and/or listed in the protocol and consent form as a risk of participating in the research. Examples of an anticipated adverse event include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A participant in a study of domestic violence becomes upset during the re-telling of the traumatic event and requires a referral to a counsellor.

An Unanticipated Adverse Event is one that was not reasonably expected and/or is not listed in the protocol and consent form as a risk of participating in the research. Examples of an unanticipated adverse event include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A participant in a study of the benefits of eating strawberries experiences a previously undetected allergy to strawberries;
- A child participant in a study of how to improve classroom behaviour experiences bullying by other students as a result of her participation in the study.

A Serious Adverse Event is one whose magnitude or frequency is above expectation. For example:

- An anticipated side effect of a certain dietary protocol results in a much more serious manifestation of that effect than would be expected (i.e., a high-fibre diet results in severe diarrhoea and vomiting requiring hospitalisation).

A Related adverse event is one that, in the opinion of the investigator, is likely caused by or affects the research.

- A participant in a study about domestic abuse experiences a panic attack after telling the investigator about a incidence of physical or verbal abuse;
- A participant in a study about the benefits of a nutritional supplement on recovery from weight lifting experiences an allergic reaction to the product after it is ingested.

Events that are not related to study procedures and are not serious may be reported at the time of re-approval. Examples of unrelated events that may be reported at the time of re-approval include:

- A participant in a study gets the flu and has to withdraw from the study (report as a withdrawal);
- A participant in a longitudinal study of high school students' transition to college life drops out of school and withdraws from the study (report as a withdrawal);
- A participant in an observational study of child behaviour during breaktime falls on the playground and sprains her ankle (report in summary of findings);

TO BE PROCESSED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING AN ADVERSE EVENT

Please complete project details:

Project Title:
Name of learner/ researcher
Name of Supervisor:
Carlow College (External College) E-mail:
Contact Tel No.:
Course Name and Code (if applicable):
Date of event:

Notifications of adverse events: Please provide details of circumstances that gave rise to the adverse event
How many were affected by the event?
Please specify the corrective actions employed
Has this issue been resolved?

Signed: ___________________________________

(delete as appropriate) Lead Researcher/learner in case of project work

Date: ___________________________________

Notification of adverse events should be submitted electronically to snichuileann@carlowcollege.ie **and marked urgent.**

Appendix 8. Handling Complaints Regarding 'Research Misconduct'

Researchers may make honest errors in collection or interpretation of data, but penalties for misconduct may apply where practices have been adopted that deviate significantly from those commonly accepted by the academic community for conducting, reporting, or proposing research. These include plagiarism, misuse of funds, and fabrication of data, but also abuse of position, e.g. as supervisor, lead author or reviewer. All unethical conduct of research involving humans should be reported in the first instance to the relevant dissertation supervisor and then to the Chair of REAC.

'Research Misconduct' Definition

Research misconduct means fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Further definitions are as follows:

a. Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
b. Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
c. Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
d. A breach of research ethics that centres around Data Protection
e. Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.