



The Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

How to prepare a PICF

The PICF is a letter of invitation and an 'agreement' for participants to participate in your research. Ideally, the PICF should be written in an inviting tone and at a level that the participants you are attempting to recruit will understand.

Your information sheet should tell your participants, what your research is about, why they have been invited to participate in your research and what you are wanting them to participate in.

This information must provide them with all the detail they require to make a voluntary decision to participate in your research.

The second part of the PICF – the consent form – is the formal agreement by a participant to participate in a project.

So that the information statement achieves the appropriate standard for ethical research at RMIT it must include the following:

Researcher / project details

- Identification of RMIT University (RMIT logo used, relevant college and/or school named)
- The title of the project
- The names of all investigators including supervisors and their contact details
- The aims and purposes of the study
- The anticipated outcomes of the research

Procedures / Risks

- Details of what the participant will be required to do (including time commitment)
- Details of data collection tools / procedures e.g. use of video- or audio recording
- Possible benefits and harms to the participant
- Possible benefits and harms of the study
- Any alternatives to participation

Right to withdraw

- The right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research without being penalised

Privacy and Confidentiality procedures / data use and storage

- The degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to participants
- The anticipated use of the data – including how the results of the study will be disseminated
- Issues relating to data storage and security
- Details of how and where identifying information (including images) will be published, including the RMIT online repository

Funding Sources and payment to participants

- The identity of funding bodies and sponsors
- Any payment to participants

Further Assistance

- Provision of services to participants adversely affected by research
- Contact details of a person (locally) to receive any complaint. The standard statement / footnote must be included at the end of your PICF (if you are planning to use a hard copy of the information sheet, please ensure that the web address for HREC complaints is not hyperlinked).

Receiving consent from a participant

A key component of ethical research is that the participant consents to their participation in the project. The information statement outlines the project so that potential participants understand fully what their involvement in a project will mean for them. Once the project has been explained to a potential participant then the researcher needs to formally record that they agree to their involvement in a project.

There are basic elements to be covered, but it is a matter for the researchers to determine the content appropriate to the specific research project.

The consent form provides a means of recording that a participant:

- Has had the project explained and has received an information sheet
- Agrees to participate in the project as described
- Agrees to particular tasks, procedures or processes, for example:
 - 'I agree to undertake the tests or procedures outlined above'
 - 'I agree to be interviewed and/or complete a questionnaire'
 - 'I agree to have my voice audio recorded'
 - 'I give permission to have my image taken'

Recording personal images

If you are taking, using and/or disclosing images of a person, there are a number of issues in relation to informed consent that need to be addressed. The wording of your consent form needs to address the following points:

1. The participant understands that images will be recorded
2. The participant gives permission to have their image taken, and the following options are available:
 - i. any identifying feature must be disguised, or
 - ii. the personal image can be published or presented without any attempt made to disguise the identity
3. The image may not be altered (re 2i above) or used for any other purpose without the participant's approval
4. Not all images that are recorded may be used
5. The images will be published in a thesis/project report/publication [specify as appropriate]. Such a report may include a digital copy of the thesis/publication which may be accessible via the internet
6. The images will be used for the specified purpose only (that is, only for the current research project)
7. The participant is free to withdraw from the project and to withdraw any images of themselves, *prior to the publication of the project report or thesis*
8. All images, used and unused, will be securely stored at RMIT University
9. Requirements for retention and destruction of images retained five (5) years after publication of the thesis/project [specify as appropriate], other than those which are published as part of a final work published as an ADR.
10. If images are uploaded onto the Internet that the research participant understands the permanency of this decision - that their image will remain available on the Internet

As appropriate the consent form should acknowledge other aspects related to participation

- o Voluntary participation, with right to withdraw, and date to which withdrawal of identifying information and/or images is possible
- o Privacy of personal information
- o Security of data
- o Publication of research results

A template for preparing a Participant Information and Consent Form is provided in the second half of this document (see below).

TEMPLATE FOR PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (PICF)

Note:

- The *italicised text* in the following sample PICF are recommended sub-headings. Not all of the sub-headings or other suggestions will apply to your project. You are free to adapt the wording as required.
- The PICF should be identifiable as an RMIT document through use of either RMIT letterhead or the RMIT logo.

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[*SAMPLE PICF*]

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Game cultures in Vietnam

Investigators:

Chief Investigator: Name:

RMIT email:

RMIT phone:

Project Supervisor: Name:

RMIT email:

RMIT phone:

Researcher: Name:

RMIT email:

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

The research in which you are being asked to participate is a research course project being undertaken by research participants in the RMIT University Playable Media Methods masterclass on Game Cultures in Vietnam. One of the designated purposes of this masterclass is to develop in participants ability to use appropriate research methods to design and execute substantial projects, to evaluate the outcomes, and theorise about their significance to professional knowledge and practice within the fields of digital ethnography and Game Studies. The project is being supervised by Dr Emma Witkowski and the Project Supervisor named on the previous page.

The project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. This research is not being funded by any bodies external to the University.

Why have you been approached?

— You have been approached because this research project is concerned with gathering data from a general public playing games at net cafes or in public space.

— You have been approached because of your industry expertise. Your contact details were accessed through the public domain (e.g., your company website).

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

The purpose of this project is to develop qualitative research skills, and theoretical/practical training in the study of networked games including networked media artefacts (mobile, social media, game platforms), including practice with qualitative research skills such as participant observations and interviewing. Researcher participants will be focusing upon the experience of digital play in a particular place, and the use of various networked technologies at these sites. The fieldwork methods include interviews, participant observation, and observations.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

Interviews (participant not identified, no filming/photography of facial features)

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher in relation to the topic of their research. As a semi-structured interview, there will be a number of guiding questions on digital gaming practice, but other following questions may also be asked as issues of relevance are identified. You are at liberty not to answer any questions that are raised during the interview.

You are at liberty to end and withdraw from the interview at any time and, if you choose, to have any information given destroyed and not used in the project.

The interviews are being conducted anonymously. While you may be asked to provide demographic data, you will not be identified personally in the analysis or reporting of the research findings.

Interviews (participant identified, with audio, video or photographic recording)

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher in relation to the topic of their research. As a semi-structured interview, there will be a number of guiding questions, but other following questions may also be asked as issues of relevance are identified. You may choose to not answer any questions that are raised during the interview. As a part of this project, you will be photographed, or recorded using audio or video recording.

Observation with participants' knowledge

You are being asked to participate in a research project that involves the observation of your play in an everyday situation. As a part of this project, you will be photographed, or recorded using audio or video recording.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages?

Delete as required (identifiable and non-identifiable participants)

— Because your responses will not be identifiable when research is made public, there are no perceived risks associated with participation, beyond the disruption to your normal day-to-day activities that your time commitment to the research will represent.

The research has been evaluated as low risk, and we do not anticipate that there will be any unpleasant or invasive questions asked. If you are concerned about any of the questions or your responses, or if you find participation in the project distressing, you should contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Emma Witkowski, as soon as convenient. Dr Witkowski will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up and support services, if necessary.

There are no risks associated with non-participation.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research.

There is no foreseeable direct benefit to yourself as a result of your participation, but the research may make a beneficial contribution to scholarly and industry knowledge, both local and international, and it will inform the researcher's future professional practice and research.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Delete as required (identifiable and non-identifiable participants)

— Your contribution to this research will remain anonymous. You will not be identified at any stage of the research, and no personal information (e.g., contact details) will be retained.

— The information you contribute to this research will be anonymous, but some personal information is necessary to the conduct of the research (e.g., your name and contact details). This personal information will remain confidential and will only be accessible to the research team.

— The information you contribute to this research will be identifiable, either because your identity is important to the project (e.g., because of your professional standing) or because an audio or video recording or photography will be a part of the final research publication(s). You will not remain anonymous, but all personal information necessary to the conduct of the research (e.g., your contact details) will remain confidential and will only be accessible to the research team.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

The information you provide may be published as scholarly or professional conference presentations or articles. All research data (the raw information and/or images) will be kept securely at RMIT for five years after publication, before being destroyed. The final research publication(s) may remain online indefinitely.

What are my rights as a participant?

In giving consent to being a participant in this project, you have:

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time prior to the point of publication
- The right to request that any recording cease
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to be de-identified in any photographs or recordings intended for public publication, before the point of publication
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions, you may in the first instance contact the student researcher at the email address supplied on the first page of this document. If you have further questions or concerns, you may contact the project supervisor named on the first page of this document, or you may contact the chief investigator, Dr Emma Witkowski, at emma.witkowski@rmit.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

Project Supervisor:

Name:

Qualifications:

RMIT email:

RMIT phone:

Student Researcher:

Name:

Qualifications:

RMIT email:

RMIT phone:

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au

CONSENT TEMPLATE

Not required if consent is implied (e.g. return or completion of an anonymous survey) ie this section can be deleted.

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. Where the research project outlined involves the recording of images, I:
 - understand that images will be recorded
 - give permission to have my image taken, and that my personal image can be published or presented without any attempt made to disguise my identity
 - understand that my image may not be altered or used for any other purpose without the my approval
 - understand that not all images that are recorded may be used
 - understand that the images will be published in a dissertation or creative work, and that this may be published or exhibited and may be accessible via the internet
 - understand that the images will be used for the specified purpose only (that is, only for the current research project)
 - understand that I am free to withdraw from the project and to withdraw any images of myself, *prior to the publication of the project report or thesis*
 - understand that all images, used and unused, will be securely stored at RMIT University
 - understand the requirements for retention and destruction of images retained five (5) years after publication of the research project, other than those which are published as part of a final work or dissertation
 - understand that if images are uploaded onto the Internet, I understand the permanency of this decision, and that my image will remain available on the Internet.
4. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
 - (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
 - (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
 - (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to (researcher to specify).

Participant's Consent

Participant: _____ Date: _____
(Signature)

Witness:

[only required if research is assessed as more than low risk; otherwise delete]

Witness: _____ Date: _____
(Signature)

Participants should be given a photocopy of this PICF after it has been signed.