GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide researchers with information about the requirements related to recruitment of participants and guidance on the development of recruitment materials. Templates of recruitment materials are provided at the end of this document.

Recruitment cannot begin until Research Ethics Board (REB) approval has been given.

2. Background

In your REB application, you **must** fully describe your recruitment plan and provide all recruitment materials for review (e.g., recruitment emails, phone scripts for recruitment, social media postings, etc.).

Your recruitment material should provide an overview of what your research is about (often a title and one or two sentences or bullets about the research), eligibility and/or ineligibility criteria, what the potential participant will be required to do (e.g., a 30-minute survey), name of the principal applicant with contact information, and funders of the research. See template for further details.

Recruitment can be done in a number of ways depending on the context of your research. Examples include posting flyers on bulletin boards, speaking to someone in person or by telephone, sending someone an email, or posting online through social media platforms or online discussion boards. Regardless of the method, your protocol needs to include all recruitment material, including a script you will use to speak to people in person or over the phone.

For many recruitment methods, institutional permissions must be sought in advance. For example, you may need permission to post a notice on a bulletin board in an institution or organization, to post an online notice in a closed group or page in a social network platform, or via list serves. Documentation of this approval must be submitted and/or confirmed in your protocol.

Please note: Although you may obtain ethical approval to conduct your recruitment, it does not mean that the organization, social network group or owner of a list serve will agree to share your recruitment notice. For instance, the university has many list serves, including student lists in departments, faculty members' lists in various departments, etc. The person responsible for that list is not required to share your recruitment notice because you receive ethics approval. Please do not attempt to use Toronto Metropolitan University's Research Ethics Board approval as a way to coax someone to share your recruitment material.

3. Recruitment and Undue Influence

Article 3.1 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) focuses on voluntary consent. If a researcher has a previous relationship (whether personal or professional) with a potential participant, this can affect the voluntary nature of participation. Someone may feel obligated to the researcher given the relationship. This does not mean that a researcher cannot attempt to recruit people they know; the researcher simply has to ensure that they emphasize the voluntary nature of participation and that whether or not someone chooses to participate will not impact their future relationship. This should be emphasized in recruitment scripts with any individuals with whom a researcher has a previous or current relationship. However, if the relationship between a researcher and potential participants involves the researcher having **power over** the participant, like an instructor/student relationship or clinician/client, then the method of recruitment should involve someone other than the person in that relationship conducting the recruitment. For instance, an instructor may have a research assistant conduct the recruitment to ensure there is no undue influence placed on the student.

Here are a few examples where a research participant may experience undue influence:

Example # 1. A nurse who works in a cardiac care unit is doing her Masters research on cardiac patients and their educational needs. She plans to interview patients and health care providers and hopes to recruit patients and her colleagues from the unit where she works. In this instance, the nurse could have someone else conduct the recruitment with patients but could recruit colleagues and emphasize the voluntary nature of participation, and that whether or not the person participates, it will not impact their future relationship.

Example # 2. A part-time MBA student is working on her Major Research Project on best Human Resource (HR) practices in banking. She hopes to interview HR professionals at a major Canadian bank, at which she is an employee. In this instance, if the student is not a supervisor of any of the potential participants, the student would emphasize that whether or not someone chooses to participate, it would not impact their future relationship.

Example # 3. A social work graduate student works part-time in an agency for mothers with developmental disabilities. She wishes to study the therapeutic relationships between front line workers and clients, and whether these relationships contribute to client empowerment. She hopes to enroll her colleagues as well as her former clients. In this case, recruiting former clients mitigates the risk of undue influence.

4. What to Include in Recruitment Materials

•   Recruitment flyers and posters that are approved by the REB should include the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) logo and all partner and funder logos. If logos cannot be included, institutions that are involved in the research should be explicitly noted. If the funder

of the research has any involvement in the research, such as recruitment, data collection, analysis, storing of data, analysis and/or dissemination of the research, this should be made clear in the recruitment material. This may be the case with some corporate funders. Potential participants need to be aware of any conflict of interests with the funders, and whether the funders have a vested financial interest, such as benefitting monetarily from the data collected by the researcher.

• The principal applicant's name and any affiliations should be noted on the recruitment material.

• Lay language should typically be used in all participant-facing materials, including recruitment notices. Be sure that your language is accessible and appropriate for the participants you will be recruiting.

• Avoid language that is overly incentivizing (e.g., "Do you want to earn $25!!!!! WE NEED YOU!!!!!"). Noting that an incentive will be given without the amount of the incentive is appropriate. You may note that reimbursement for childcare or transit/parking will be provided, if applicable.

• If stating that incentives will be provided, please ensure that this information is not bolded or emphasized in particular.

• All recruitment materials should include the study title, a short description of the study and the purpose, inclusion criteria (who can participate) and any exclusion criteria (who cannot participate), the time commitment for participation, brief information on what will be asked in a survey or interview, funding for the project (if any), and any incentives or reimbursements being offered.

• Include information about how to contact the researcher using a TMU phone and/or a TMU email address. Personal phone numbers should not be included.

• Recruitment material should include the following statement: "This research study has been reviewed by the TMU Research Ethics Board and note the REB protocol number (e.g., 2017-123)."

• You can use clipart or images to attract attention to your poster, but it should not be overly emphasized (e.g., a dollar sign picture $$$$ or a picture taking up a large amount of space, while the font of the text is very small).

• The recruitment notice should not include what is often seen as high-pressure sales tactics but should read as a research recruitment notice. For instance, avoid wording such as "call now," "limited opportunity," "help advance science," or "your participation is important."

5. Online Recruitment Methods

If you are recruiting online from a social network or on a group page, chat room, or discussion board, please ensure that you seek permission from the group or page moderators.

Please note explicitly in your application where you will post notices online. Be as specific as possible, outlining the website or social network, whether the page or website is open to anyone to post (as opposed to requiring login) or if permissions must be sought.

You should provide information about where the notice will be posted. For example, if posting on Facebook, we strongly recommend that you do not log in to post your recruitment notice using a personal Facebook profile. We recommend that if using Twitter or something similar, you create a temporary account that is research-specific only, rather than using a personal account.

If you are using Twitter (or something similar) to aid in your recruitment, please note that you should provide, in your application:

(a) Information about the Twitter account from which the recruitment notices will originate;

(b) The 140-character tweet;

(c) Information about the landing page to which an individual will be taken if they click on a URL in the tweet.

If you are using Facebook (or something similar) to aid in your recruitment, please note that you should provide, in your application:

(a) The recruitment notice/posting;

(b) Information about the pages/groups where the notice will be posted;

(c) Information about whether the pages/groups are open or closed; and

(d) The account from which you are posting.

When recruiting on social media it is important to think carefully about the implications on the confidentiality of the recruitment process. For example, individuals may comment on a recruitment posting on Facebook, thus visible to others as potentially interested participants. It might be helpful to add explicit wording to recruitment postings or tweets to instruct anyone with questions about participating to contact the researcher directly by email or by private or direct messaging.

If you are using an online classified site such as Kijiji or Craigslist to recruit participants, please note that you should not post in the "employment" sections, but rather in volunteer or research sections, as appropriate.

6. In-Class Recruitment of Students

If your project involves university students, you will need to ensure that minimal class time is used to recruit for research, and that recruitment is carried out with the instructor's permission. If the research is part of the learning experience, please consult with the REB on how to design this research to ensure voluntariness. Ideally, the professor or instructor in the class should not be associated with the research, but there may be situations in which they are involved in the research. If that is the case, the professor should leave the classroom while the study is being introduced and when recruitment is underway, in order to avoid having students feel that they are obligated to participate. Care must be taken to ensure that the professor does not have knowledge of who agrees to participate.

7. Recruitment of School Age Students

Some projects involve schoolchildren in grades K-12 with recruitment being conducted through the school system, individual schools, or classrooms. Please note that most school boards have their own REB process that must be completed before research recruitment can be undertaken. Permission only from a teacher to access her/his class without permissions from the principal and without consulting with the school board REB is not sufficient. Of course, parental consent or assent may also be required.

8. Recruitment of Patients in Hospitals or Persons Who Are Institutionalized or Residents of Group Homes or Long-Term Care Settings

All research-related activities conducted within another institution must be done only after the researcher has sought the appropriate permissions. This includes permission for recruiting participants. Care must be taken to seek appropriate permissions to access individuals in institutions such as hospitals or group homes and that REB approval, at these institutions, have been sought and obtained. At many hospitals and long-term care settings, there is a REB review process for external researchers who wish to carry out recruitment (passive or active) on their premises or with their patients or residents.

Hospitals have their own REBs as well as local requirements for researchers regarding how recruitment can be carried out. Other types of residential institutions (group homes, agencies, long term care settings, etc.,) may have a REB of record, or another type of ethics review process. There may be both REB requirements and specific permissions to seek before engaging in recruitment, and each local REB can provide more information to you on the types of local permissions that must be sought.

9. Recruitment Poster Template

[Toronto Metropolitan University logo] [other partner logos]

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

[specify topic title]

Are You:

- [enter criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion in the study – this could be things like age range, students, ethnic/cultural or religious background, etc.]

If you answered yes to the above noted questions you may volunteer in this study. The study [enter further information about your study beyond the scope of the title provided above].

You will be asked to [note in general terms all of the expectations like anonymous online survey, interview, focus group, etc.]

Your participation will involve [enter the number of sessions, maximum time expected for each session, etc.]

In appreciation of your time, you will receive [insert any incentive being provided and/or reimbursement for costs to the participant, e.g., transit tokens, childcare, etc.]

If you are interested in participating in this study, or would like more information, please contact:

[Insert contact name and title – if you are a student, mention this is part of your studies]
[Insert contact department]
416-979-5000 x0000 [do not use personal phone numbers]
Email: [insert email address]
[If the contact information above differs from the principal researcher please insert] The primary researcher of this study is [insert PIs name]

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Toronto Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board [insert REB protocol number i.e. 2017-000] and is funded by [Insert funder if project is funded].

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

[Insert email]

[Insert Name of researcher or title of study and phone number and/or email address]

10. Email, Phone or In-Person Script Template

Hello,

My name is [insert name]. I am a [student, researcher, research assistant] at Toronto Metropolitan University in the [Department/School, etc.]. I am contacting you to see if you might be interested in participating in a research study.

[If you are a student, include the following sentence:] This research is being done as part of my [Masters/PhD] project and my supervisor's name is [insert name and title]. The focus of the research is [general purpose of the research, what will be explored].

To participate you need to be [include eligibility criteria, e.g., between the ages of 17–29 and a current undergraduate student].

If you agree to volunteer you will be asked to [note in general terms all of the expectations like anonymous online survey, interview, focus group, etc.]

Your participation will involve [enter the number of sessions, maximum time expected for each session, etc.]

In appreciation of your time, you will receive [insert any incentive being provided and/or reimbursement for costs to the participant, e.g., transit tokens, childcare, etc.].

[Insert this sentence if you have any previous relationship with a potential participant:] Your participation is completely voluntary and if you choose not to participate it will not impact our relationship [insert this if you know the potential participant], or your relationship with [insert any agency you might be recruiting from] or Toronto Metropolitan University.

The research is funded by [Insert name of funder] and has been reviewed and approved by the Toronto Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board. [If the nature of the partnership with the funder involves sharing of information to the funder, or if the funders have a vested financial interest, such as benefiting monetarily from the data collected by the researcher, etc. please explain this partnership. This is often important with corporate funders.]

If you are interested in more information about the study or would like to volunteer, please reply to this email or call [416-979-5000 x0000].

11. Twitter Template

Research Participants Sought #[topic] @TorontoMet @[insert your name or study name] [insert link to online information about study that will include further information as per the templates above and/or consent for online survey]