

# SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATIONS RECRUITING FROM THE TED ROGERS SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT (TRSM) RESEARCH POOL

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## 1. Purpose

This document was originally drafted by the Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM) and is intended to facilitate the preparation of your application for Research Ethics Board (REB) approval for all studies that meet the following criteria:

- 1) Research will involve human participants, and thus be subject to the ethical guidelines determined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement;
- 2) Recruitment will, in part or in total, be conducted through the TRSM Student Research Pool, using the SONA software. \*<sup>i</sup>

**Please note, this document is not a replacement for ethics approval. Nor does following this advice guarantee approval.** The items outlined below refer to specific sections of the ethics application relating to recruitment, conflict of interest, and compensation only—all other aspects of the ethics application are researcher/research dependent and should be completed based on the individual's project.

## 2. Key Terms

**Instructor:** We use this term in this document to refer to any person who teaches a course, regardless of their title (e.g., Associate Professor) or union affiliation (i.e., RFA or CUPE).

**Researcher:** This is the individual or individuals conducting or supervising the research.

## 3. REB Protocol: Section – Conflict of Interest

This section asks the following:

*Question: “Are there any potential or perceived conflicts of interest that you foresee in conducting the research?”*

*The Tri-Council Policy Statement defines Conflict of Interest as follows: “A conflict of interest may arise when activities or situations place an individual or institution in a real, potential or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, and personal, institutional or other interests.” More generally, Conflict of Interest arises in any situation in which an individual is expected to exercise judgement on behalf of someone else, but has some ‘outside’ or personal interest that could threaten the impartiality of that judgement. Often the competing interest here will be a financial interest, but it need not be.”*

A key example would be if you have a financial interest in the outcome of your research, such that a reasonable person might worry that you would be tempted – consciously or subconsciously – either to mistreat or misinform research participants, or to interpret research results in a way that amounts to misrepresentation.

**Please note:** Being in a conflict of interest is not unethical. A conflict of interest is simply a feature of certain kinds of situations. Answering “yes” to this question does not mean admitting to anything bad, or that your judgment will be biased, but rather acknowledges that you understand that it is a possibility of which you are aware, and will actively avoid or manage appropriately.

In the relatively unlikely event that you answer ‘Yes’ to this question, you are required to enter an explanation and to have a plan to deal with the conflict.

**One example of a possible response:**

“As an instructor at TRSM, there is the possibility that one or more of the participants in the research pool may be taking a course which I am teaching, even if that course is not one of those in which students may earn a bonus mark for research participation. There is thus the possibility that my judgment or behaviour towards such participants, in my classroom, could be affected by their involvement in this research project.”

A statement such as the following might constitute suitable plans for mitigating the impact of this conflict:

“In the course of my research, I will not personally come into direct contact with the participants; all direct contact will be left to a research assistant. Also, in the course of the research we will collect no personal information (e.g., name, email address, etc.) that would allow me to identify after the fact which, if any, of my students actually participated. The only information collected for identification purposes will be the participants’ SONA ID, which is a unique number used for granting credits, and will not allow me to identify the students. Given these precautions, there is a very low probability of any adverse behavior resulting from this conflict of interest.”

#### 4. REB Protocol: Section – Research Methods/Design

Subsection (e) asks if you will be collecting demographic information from the participant. This will depend on the nature of your particular study. In the context of the TRSM Student Research Pool, you are not required to collect participants’ names. To link participants and sign-ups, and assign credit for participation, you should only collect the 4-digit unique identifier code provided by the SONA system to identify the participants.

#### 5. REB Protocol: Section – Selection and Recruitment

This section is the most directly relatable to using the TRSM Student Research Pool for recruitment. We will cover each question below.

*Question: “(A) Inclusion and Exclusion criteria.*

*Please describe, in detail, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participants.”*

The TRSM Student Research Pool does not currently maintain any pre-testing or data collection that would allow for direct inclusion/exclusion criteria. However, you may opt to use the course offerings to limit participation as a proxy for age and/or learning experiences. To use any exclusion/inclusion criteria, we suggest consulting with the SONA system or the Pool administrator to identify courses currently participating in the Pool. Otherwise, we suggest the following response:

“Recruitment will occur using the TRSM Student Research Pool. Although the pool is only open to select students in approved courses, this study will not apply any further inclusion/exclusion criteria.”

*Question: “(B) How will recruitment be conducted? Please describe all possible ways that you are planning on recruiting potential participants. If you will be emailing or phoning, please include how you will access contact information such as email addresses and phone numbers.”*

The recommended response to this question is:

“Recruitment will occur through the TRSM Student research pool, using the SONA system.”

*Question: “(C) Are there any already existing relationships between the researcher and potential participants that may possibly contribute to feelings of obligation or undue influence to take part?” (e.g., instructor-student, service provider-client, manager-employee, etc.)*

As indicated in the Conflict of Interest section (see above), as an instructor at TRSM there is the possibility that you may be teaching one or more of the participants in the TRSM Student Research Pool. Therefore, the answer to the above question is again, ‘Yes’. When you answer ‘yes’, you are prompted to outline the relationship and strategies which you will put in place to avoid feelings of obligation. We recommend you include the following response, and observe the stated tenets:

“Since the primary researcher is an instructor at TRSM, then there is the possibility that the researcher will know/recognize some of the participants.

First, there will be no way for the researcher, prior to the running of the study, to know which students did/did not sign up, since participants use a unique identifier for the signup process.

Second, the researcher will not be able to identify participants’ individual responses, for this same reason.

Third, the Student Research Pool is opt-in for bonus marks, so students are already making a choice about whether or not to participate.

In addition, the researcher commits to not discussing the study in his/her role as an instructor.”

*Question: “(D) Will you be using recruitment flyers/brochures/advertisements to recruit potential participants? (See template for information to include on recruitment material.)”*

*Question: “(E) Will you be sending e-mails or using social networks to recruit participants (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)? Please note, if using websites like Kijiji to advertise, please place the notice under ‘volunteering’, not under ‘jobs’. (See template for information to include on recruitment.)”*

*Question: “(F) Will you be recruiting people in-person or over the phone?”*

*Question: “(G) Will you be recruiting from introductory psychology courses at Ryerson University (PSY 102 or PSY 202)?”*

If you are only using the TRSM Student Research Pool, the answer to all of questions D, E, F, and G is ‘No’.

*Question: “(H) Will you be recruiting from the Ted Rogers School of Management Student Research Pool?”*

The appropriate answer to this question is ‘Yes’.

## 6. REB Protocol: Section – Potential Risk and Benefit

Under subsection (b) of this section, you are asked to indicate whether or not there is the potential for dual-role risk (e.g., risk related to already existing relationships between researcher and participants). Again, as an instructor at TRSM, you must acknowledge that this is a possibility, and therefore check this box. There are two additional responses required when checking yes: a description of the risk, and steps being taken to mitigate this risk. We recommend the following language, and protocols:

Description of risk: “As an instructor at TRSM, there exists the possibility that participants may be taking one or more of the courses I teach. Therefore, there is the possibility that I may know some of the student participants in my study.”

How the risk will be managed/mitigated:

“First, I will not mention the ongoing study in any of my courses, in order to not put pressure on any participants to sign-up for and complete my study.

Second, since the TRSM Student Research Pool is based on a unique identifier, rather than names, for participants, I will have no way of knowing who participated or not, from my dataset. Further, even if I deduce that one or more of my students participated (e.g., seeing them complete the study), I will in no way be able to associate the specific student’s responses, since it will only be associated with the unique identifier.

**[Include if appropriate]:** Third, since the study is being conducted online, I will not directly observe who participates and who does not.

**[Include if appropriate]:** To mitigate against this possibility, I will enlist the aid of [a colleague/research assistant] to administer the in-person study, and will therefore not have direct contact with the participants.”

**Where it is feasible, this last option provides the greatest reassurance.**

## 7. REB Protocol: Section – Privacy and Confidentiality

The Tri-Council Policy Statement distinguishes between anonymity and confidentiality as follows:

**Confidentiality** - means that the information shared and all data collected will be kept secret and not shared. Although you may meet with research participants, or you may have data that could be used to identify participants, this information will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be included in the dissemination of the results.

**Anonymity** - means that at no time will the researcher, or anyone associated with the research, know of the identity of participants. The term anonymous may be used in conjunction with surveys that are completed and submitted without any identifying information included.

The degree to which your study will be able to ensure anonymity or confidentiality is largely determined by your methodology. If you are running a survey, large-scale experiment, or similar type of study, we suggest using the following response (and appropriate protocols):

“The proposed study will, to the best of our ability, maintain participant anonymity using the following protocols:

- 1) We will only collect participant unique identifiers, which cannot be directly linked to specific participants, for the purpose of assigning research credit.
- 2) The collection of these unique identifiers will be separate from the collection of study-related responses, and therefore it will be impossible to link specific responses to any individual participant.
- 3) We will not collect any data that can be directly linked to a specific participant.
- 4) All data will be reported in aggregate form, and therefore an individual’s response(s) will not be derivable from the reported information.”

If your intended methodology involves direct contact with participants in a more intimate manner, or reporting of data that is participant-specific (e.g., using quotations following interviews or focus groups), we suggest the following response:

“The proposed study will, to the best of our ability, maintain participant confidentiality using the following protocols:

- 1) All participants will be assigned a pseudonym for identification purposes. Only the researcher(s) involved in data collection may have the ability to associate the pseudonym with the actual participant.
- 2) Any recording of information, regardless of format (e.g., audio recordings, video recordings, field notes) will use this pseudonym for identification purposes.
- 3) All dissemination of the results will similarly use the pseudonym only to identify responses.
- 4) While we will collect participants' unique identifier in order to grant credit for participation, this information will be collected separately from the study-related data, and destroyed after granting credit."

## 8. REB Protocol: Section – Incentives and Reimbursements

The first question in this section asks whether participants will be incentivized, and if so, to describe the incentives. Since student participants will earn credit towards a bonus mark in a particular course, the answer to this question is 'Yes'. We suggest the following response for the description:

"In exchange for participating in this study, participants will earn credit towards a bonus mark in one participating course of their choice. In exchange for participation in this [select one: 15 minute; 30 minute; 45 minute; 60 minute; 75 minute; 90 minute; 105 minute; 120 minute] study, participants will earn a [select one: 0.25%; 0.5%; 0.75%; 1%; 1.25%; 1.5%; 1.75%; 2%] bonus credit towards a per-semester maximum of 2%."

Please note: you will need to adjust the specifics of the incentive based on the length of your study. You will also be required to include this information (incentive) in your Letter of Information.

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<sup>i</sup> **N.B \*** *The recommended responses and language have been vetted by the REB, and therefore should help both the researcher and the REB in efficient processing of the application. Alteration of the suggested wording is not recommended, unless specific aspects of the research require such deviations.*