

## **GENERAL TIPS FOR KEEPING DOCTORAL RESEARCH AS ETHICAL AS POSSIBLE**

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**Below are some solutions to the most frequently occurring ethical challenges in doctoral research as identified by the Institutional Review Board (IRB):**

**1. Use anonymous methods if possible.**

This is the simplest way to avoid pressuring subordinates, students, or other vulnerable individuals to participate in your doctoral research.

**2. Separate researcher role from all others.**

This avoids unethical dynamics in which a subordinate, student, or client mistakenly believes that the data collection is part of their job, education, treatment, or any other aspect of your professional role.

**3. Pay very close attention to alignment among the research question, planned analyses, and types of data collection proposed.**

The IRB can only approve those specific components of data collection that show promise of effectively addressing the research question(s).

**4. Use existing data whenever possible.**

This avoids burdening others with risky or time-consuming tasks, just for the benefit of your doctoral study. When collection of new data poses substantial time demands or privacy/safety risks to participants, the research design will be closely examined so that the potential benefits can be weighed against potential risks.

**5. Use existing measures whenever possible.**

Unless the specific purpose of the doctoral research is the validation of a new measure, creating a new instrument is typically beyond the scope of a doctoral study.

**6. Check and DOUBLECHECK that all IRB materials reflect the final set of research questions and procedures.**

The IRB does not review the entire proposal and can only approve the procedures that are listed in the IRB application itself. Thus, all participant recruitment and data collection procedures **MUST** be described in item 12 of the IRB application. If an audit reveals that a student deviated from that specific list of IRB-approved procedures, then the data can be invalidated and the final doctoral study rejected.

**7. In Section 3, include expected study outcomes.**

**8. In Section 4, Make sure you describe the characteristics of the population and of the sample.** What data will be collected? What is expected of the subjects as participants in this study? What questions will be asked of the subjects? Please explain further your research

methodology and data collection processes. Please consider the need for a Premises Permission form for this study. Please address any stressors or risks that may be associated with this study as they pertain to the subjects. Please explain further your research methodology and data collection processes. Please include the name of the organization on the Premises Permission form. Please provide a copy of the survey questions.

Make certain you describe the selection criteria that will be used and the processes for selection, recruitment and enlistment. When possible provide the sample size.

How will the participants be identified?

**9. In Section 7, please explain how the information concerning withdrawal will be communicated to the participants.**

**10. When discussing outcomes of the study do NOT use the word “will.” You can use “may” or “could” instead.**

**11. Provide a rationale for the sample size – make sure this is in accord with the methodology.**

**12. Make sure you indicate explicitly on the form if the intention is to record the data collection, as this is an aspect of consent. This can be done by customizing point four of the six points of understanding. Please customize the Informed Consent form with your name and contact information as indicated.**

- 1) Please confirm where the data collection will occur, and complete a Premises Permission form as appropriate.*
- 2) Regarding the permission to use email records, please provide a copy of the permission form without blackened out portions. It is unclear, for example, to whom permission is given in the current document.*
- 3) On the Informed Consent form, please identify the researcher’s name in paragraph #1.*

**13. In Section 9, please describe in detail the coding system that will be used as it ensures data confidentiality. How will the data be disposed of at the end of the retention time period?**

**14. Make sure your name and signature match.**

**16. If conducting interview make sure you state how many hours you expect the interviews to take.**

**16. If no compensation is offered, please state so.**

**17. Please avoid copying verbatim language from a form to provide a response.**