DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BA/BSc RESEARCH PROJECT

PS357 HANDBOOK

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Contents

Independent Research Project (PS357)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The final year Independent Research Project is a critical component of your degree. It allows you to pick an area of psychology that you are interested in; to spend time exploring issues related to that topic; to design an empirical study; to collect primary data, or source secondary data, to address your research objectives; to analyse your data, or systematically review existing literature; and evaluate your findings as they pertain to the existing literature in your chosen area.

As the Research Project is worth 20 credits (out of 60 credits in final year), it is important that you engage fully with it. **PS357 is a required module and must be passed without compensation (i.e., mark of 40% achieved).**

The Independent Research Project is designed to help you develop a number of critical skills that not only pertain to the degree itself, but which are transferrable to life after university. The module provides experience in conceptualising and conducting empirical research in psychology, and to establish the skills necessary to produce a research report according to current academic standards within psychology.

On successful completion of the project, you should be able to:
- Design, plan, and execute a research study in a scientific and professional manner.
- Collect primary data or source secondary data to complete a research project.
- Analyse data using the appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative methods or review existing literature in a systematic way.
- Produce a written report of a research study that follows the conventions of the discipline.
- Rigorously apply professional ethical standards in designing, conducting, and reporting psychological research.
- Critically evaluate the literature, theory, application, and practice within the field.

RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

You are required to submit an electronic copy of your Research Project Proposal Form (see Appendix I) via Turnitin on the PS357 Moodle Page. You and your supervisor must approve the Research Project Proposal Form before it is submitted.

The deadline for submission of the Project Proposal is Thursday 7th of October 2021 at 5pm.

As the Research Project Proposal Form is due for submission in the **third week of Semester 1**, it is important that you begin working on this as soon as possible. If you have not done so already, you should arrange to meet with your supervisor to discuss your research project proposal.

A template Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form is provided in Appendix II, and an Ethics Checklist for Final Year Projects is provided in Appendix III. **You must submit a completed Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, and Ethics Checklist for Final Year Projects, as appendices to your Research Project Proposal Form.**

Your Research Project Proposal Form will be reviewed by the Department of Psychology's Research Committee during week 4 of Semester 1. We aim to notify you of the outcome of this review during week 5. It is very important that you do not approach potential participants or commence any data collection until you are notified of the outcome of the ethical review process.

ETHICAL ISSUES
All research projects should be undertaken and conducted with due consideration of ethical issues. If a proposed project raises ethical issues that require special attention, you and your supervisor should note these. The Department's Research Committee will look at all project proposals, and your supervisor may wish to raise specific issues. Your supervisor will inform you of the outcome of the assessment. If necessary, the department may require that you provide additional information or clarify certain issues arising from your proposal before it can be approved.

Projects must not commence until all ethical issues have been addressed.

Copies of the Psychological Society of Ireland Code of Professional Ethics and the British Psychological Society Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles & Guidelines and Code of Human Research Ethics and guidelines on the use of social media for research are available here:
  o https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/footer/Code-of-Ethics
  o https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Human%20Research%20Ethics.pdf

If your proposed project involves working with children, Maynooth University's policy on child protection should be referenced and complied with:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Child%20Protection%20Policy%20%28Dec%202017%29_1.pdf.

If the work involves children, but contact does not occur at Maynooth University (for example, at a school), then the host partner's child protection protocol will apply.

PREPARATION

In preparing your Research Project Proposal Form, and the project itself, you should attend to the following:

- Discuss the project proposal with your supervisor, paying particular attention to ethical issues; access to participants and/or to intermediary agencies; and access to essential computer software, psychometric tests, questionnaires, and special equipment. Although this early planning is often time-consuming, it is essential to obtain, in advance, the co-operation of everyone who will be involved in your research project. If you intend to use tests and questionnaires, you must ensure that they are available and that you are fulfilling copyright obligations. If you require project cubicles, laboratory space, special equipment, or computer software, you must ensure that these will be available within the time frame of the project.

- You should clearly articulate the nature and scope of your project, as well as its main aims and objectives. Make sure that you design the project in a way that ensures it can be realistically completed within the time available. Your supervisor will advise you on this. Indicate a proposed timeline/timing of phases of the project at the end of the proposal (i.e., preparatory work, literature review, data collection/acquisition, data analysis, report writing, proof reading, and checking of references). For qualitative projects, the timelines may be different, and these should be considered.

- Provide details about the methodological design of your research project. The design of your study should be planned very carefully. You should revise earlier coursework on research design and methods of data analysis (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative). Do not be vague about any aspect of your research design. Indicate the number of participants, the settings (where applicable), and if the project involves a case study, indicate the criteria to be used for selection and which analytic techniques (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative) will be used.

- Provide details concerning the method or methods of data collection. Please note that although the use of online sources of communication (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) is permitted to recruit participants, it is important to do so in a professional and ethical manner. You must be cognisant of the ethical guidelines surrounding internet-mediated research. The British Psychological Society guidelines on internet-mediated research should be reviewed: https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/ethics-guidelines-internet-mediated-research

- **It is essential that you do not put yourself or others at risk, physically or psychologically, when identifying/recruiting participants (e.g., approaching strangers yourself or asking others to do so on your behalf). If you are in any doubt about how best to proceed in this regard, please check with your supervisor.**

- Provide details of how you intend to analyse your data. You should revise earlier coursework on methods of data analysis, and also refer to appropriate textbooks for further assistance. Ensure that the proposed methods of data analysis are appropriate for the data you intend to collect, and that the methods are appropriate for the number of participants in the study. Consider, for example, whether cell-frequencies and total numbers will be adequate for the proposed analyses. With qualitative methods similar rigour and consideration is required.

- From time to time, students may wish to conduct their research project in collaboration with external agencies and groups. These may include, but are not limited to, schools, hospitals, voluntary, and community-based groups. The department wishes to encourage this activity where practicable, as it can provide an enriching experience for the student, whilst also potentially meeting some of the research needs of the external agency/organisation. However, it is important that students are mindful of the various challenges and requirements that this type of research may pose and of the limits of their own competencies as student researchers. For example, the project will need to receive appropriate approval and support from the agency/group; this usually takes time and forward planning. In addition, certain projects may need ethical approval (from an external agency, as well as the University); some projects may also require that the researchers be Garda vetted. These processes can typically be lengthy, and the approvals must be in place before the project commences. As a student of the Department of Psychology, you are expected to conduct your project in a professional, rigorous, and ethically sensitive manner. In your dealings with external agencies, it is also important to be cognisant of the standards of communication and behaviour required.

  If you plan to work with an external agency, you should ensure that all of the following are met when preparing your Project Proposal form:

  - o Provide consent in writing from appropriate authorities (e.g., Principal of a school, Director of an agency, Co-ordinator responsible for the project at an agency, etc.).
  - o Provide consent from appropriate intermediaries (e.g., teacher, social worker, clinician etc.).
  - o Provide the consent form and detailed information sheet/material that you intend to use with participants.

- If you propose to work with a population that is potentially vulnerable, you must consult the University's Ethical Policy definition of a vulnerable group and its policy thereon: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/policies.

  Typically, work with such groups is discouraged as part of a final year undergraduate thesis. If such samples are to be recruited, ***special permission will be required*** from both the supervisor and the Department.

- Provide information pertaining to the provision of appropriate briefing of participants **prior to data collection**.

- Provide details of the procedures for debriefing participants.

- Provide details of how any participating agencies will be debriefed.

- Where relevant, provide written assurance that copyright law will be observed with respect to questionnaires, tests, instruments, computer software, reproduction of literary texts, photographs, art, etc. (e.g., evidence of purchase of copyright materials, site licences etc.).

Always remember that when conducting your research project, you are relying upon the goodwill of others in the wider community and their respect for social scientists. You must ensure that your procedures do not undermine the wider community's confidence in, or their view of, researchers. Consider carefully whether your procedures (experiments, questionnaires, or interviews) may contribute to psychological distress. If this is necessary for the investigation, you must prepare or brief participants adequately prior to working with them, and debrief them afterwards.

Under no circumstances should your research procedures cause physical or psychological harm.

Again, copies of The British Psychological Society Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles & Guidelines, and the Psychological Society of Ireland Code of Professional Ethics are available in the Departmental Office. In addition, Maynooth University's Research Ethics Policy and the Research Integrity Policy can be found at
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/policies.

<u>RESEARCH PROJECT</u>

Read this section of the handbook very carefully, and revisit it throughout your project when you are writing each section of your thesis. You should refer to the relevant course material from your modules on data analysis methods to ensure that you know and understand the types of data analyses you intend to use. You can also refer to the qualitative research module and its content for guidance. In short, you may need to revise the appropriate material on research methods and data analysis, and that means you should start revising now!

DEADLINE

An electronic copy of your thesis must be submitted via Turnitin on the PS357 Moodle page. **The deadline for the submission of the Research Project is 5pm, Thursday 24th February 2022.**

TIME-TABLING THE PROJECT

Project activities are scheduled for Semesters 1 and 2. You should have your project well underway during Semester 1. You should be ready to analyse your data in the latter half of Semester 1. However, if your project involves the collection of qualitative data, you should aim to transcribe and analyse your data as you go along because these can be very time-consuming tasks. You should begin writing your project report towards the end of Semester 1, so that you have plenty of time to proofread and correct the text of your report. Do not underestimate the time it takes to prepare the final version. There is nothing more frustrating than conducting an excellent piece of research but leaving yourself insufficient time to generate a finely polished report that does justice to your hard work.

SUPERVISION

You should keep your supervisor informed as to how your project is progressing through regular appointments. It is your responsibility to organise supervisory meetings and your supervisor is there to provide you with guidance and discuss challenges you may face. **Note, however, that your supervisor will NOT provide feedback on a written draft of any section of your project report.**

THE PROJECT REPORT: REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

The length of the report should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words, and no more than 30 X A4 pages (excluding references and appendices), size 12 font, and double-spaced. If the nature of your study requires more space, as is often the case with qualitative approaches, please discuss this with your supervisor. If your supervisor agrees that an increase in word count/pages is warranted by the method, you may exceed the limit by no more than 25%. However, this increase in word count/pages should be limited to your method and results sections only. The Introduction and Discussion sections should remain unaffected by the word count/page increase. <u>Marks will be deducted if these guidelines are clearly disregarded.</u>

PCs are available at various locations on the University campus should you require this resource to complete your thesis. **An electronic copy of your thesis must be submitted via Turnitin.** Plagiarism is very serious offence, and you should familiarise yourself with the University's Plagiarism Policy before submission:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20Updated%20July%202019_0.pdf

STRUCTURE

The general format and style of your project report should resemble a published research article in the area in which you are working. The format and style vary from area to area, but general guidelines are provided here. You should also refer to the following text for general guidance, and ensure that you follow the referencing guidelines set forth in the 7th edition of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association.

https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples

Sternberg, R. J., & Sternberg, K. (2016). *The Psychologist's Companion: A guide to scientific writing for students and researchers* (6th ed.). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Title page
The following should appear on the title page:
- o Department of Psychology, Maynooth University
- o Final Year Research Project
- o Title of Research Project
- o Thesis Presented in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements for the BA/BSc Honours Degree in Psychology, Maynooth University
- o Submitted by: Student's Name
- o Supervisor: Supervisor's Name
- o Date: Month and Year
- o Word count: Word count should only be based on the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections.

A template title page is available in Appendix IV.

Acknowledgements
Any help or assistance provided by various people and agencies should be duly acknowledged. Bear in mind that someone who assisted you in some way with the project may request a copy of the thesis, and s/he could be offended to find that the assistance provided was not recognised in print.

Table of Contents
A table of contents for your thesis must be included.

Abstract
The abstract should be no more than 250 words and contain sub-headings for the Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, and Conclusions.

Introduction
The theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research pertinent to your research topic should be thoroughly reviewed in the introduction. The Introduction should **not** read like an essay. It should be a single, gradual progression of thought starting from the general area of research and leading ultimately to a justification for your particular research objectives/hypotheses. The Introduction should outline gaps in the literature/previous research which will provide a rationale for your study. Remember, whether your design is qualitative and/or quantitative, research findings from both traditions will be helpful to you in writing a comprehensive literature review.

Aims and objectives/hypotheses
The introduction normally concludes with the presentation of your overarching research aim(s). This is generally a broad statement outlining the goal of your study which will be satisfied upon successful completion of your research objectives/hypotheses.

In exploratory based research (which can be either of a quantitative or qualitative nature), research objectives are often most appropriate to present. In research that is confirmatory in nature (which can be either of a quantitative or qualitative nature), the presentation of hypotheses is typically most appropriate. Based on your review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature, and your research aim, you will need to decide whether to present objectives or hypotheses. Please check this with your supervisor if you are unsure.

Methods

The methods section of a report should provide clear details on the participants in your study; the procedures you used to carry out your study; the materials that were used as part of your project; how you plan to analyse your data to address your research objectives/hypotheses; and how you considered and addressed all ethical issues. The specific information that you provide on the participants, procedures, materials, data analysis plan, and ethical considerations will differ depending upon the nature of your study (e.g., systematic literature review or empirical-based study), the overarching methodological approach (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods), and the specific design (e.g., experimental, longitudinal, case study etc.). If presenting mixed methods, you must make it clear how the different methods relate to each other in a complementary way. If you are performing a quantitative study, you may wish to address issues such as statistical power and management of missing data. For studies using qualitative methods, bear in mind that in this approach data collection and data analysis steps can be iterative, and it may make more sense to combine these sections.

Results

The results section for quantitative studies should include information from your statistical analysis. Typically, only statistical information pertinent to your stated research objectives/hypotheses should be reported. In other words, you should not present long passages of results that have no relevance to your stated objectives/hypotheses. The results from your statistical analysis should be presented in an order that matches your stated research objectives/hypotheses. This will help to improve clarity and interpretability, and will pave the way for structuring your Discussion section in a comprehensible manner.

You must ensure that all statistical information is presented correctly and in accordance with the requirements set forth in the 7th edition of the APA manual. For all tests you perform, you must ensure that appropriate statistical information (e.g. F-ratios, t values, degrees of freedom etc.), associated p-values, relevant effect sizes indicators (e.g., Cohen's d values, r values), and confidence intervals or standard errors are presented. Whilst we encourage students undertaking quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods projects to consider using a range of statistical approaches, these must be understood and reported correctly. In other words, if you decide to use more sophisticated analytical methods, you will lose marks if the results are not conducted, interpreted, and reported correctly.

For qualitative studies, it is important that you make judicious and selective use of quotations from your data, with emphasis to be placed on your interpretation of the data. It is important to get the balance right between avoiding overuse of quoted extracts, or extracts that are too lengthy, on the one hand, and ensuring that your interpretation is suitably grounded in the data, on the other hand. This highlights the importance of iteration. Qualitative results that make use of hierarchical structures (e.g. categories of themes, or subthemes) should also be produced following an iterative process of careful and in-depth analysis.

In the case of mixed methods, you have to be very clear about the purpose of each method and how they complement each other. Avoid disconnected subsections within your results.

You may include Tables (of results and, if appropriate, statistical analyses) and Figures (of graphs or profiles, or models/diagrams in the case of qualitative findings) to aid in the presentation of your findings. Tables and figures should be used to supplement, not to repeat, findings reported in the text, but it is always important to discuss key aspects of the findings presented therein rather than expecting the reader to decipher them. Sternberg and Sternberg (2016), and the APA Manual 7th edition, provide illustrative examples and offer advice that you should follow. The main body of the text in your report should refer appropriately to each and every Table and Figure included therein (never include a Table or Figure that is not mentioned directly in the main text).

Discussion

The discussion section should <u>not</u> be used to simply restate your findings. While it is often necessary and important to restate your statistical findings in clear language, your discussion section must be focused on *discussing* the meaning, importance, and relevance of your findings. You should discuss how your findings relate to your stated research objectives/hypotheses; how your findings contribute to the extant empirical literature and theory that you reviewed in the introduction; and the theoretical, empirical, and possibly clinical or social implications of your findings. Bear in mind that statistically non-significant or contradictory results may be as important, or perhaps even more important, than those that support your objectives/hypotheses. A review of the strengths and weaknesses of the study and directions for future research should be provided, as well as a separate concluding section.

The most experienced academic psychologist has to draft and redraft their research reports and other written outputs many times before they are complete. Therefore, do not consider your first draft to be the final one. You may need to write and re-write several versions of each section, and your overall thesis, until you are happy with it. Overall, the research project report should be well-structured, with each paragraph exploring a coherent theme, and a good transition from section to section. Be sure to read your final thesis as a single document several time to ensure that it is a coherent piece of work.

References

Ensure that these are complete and accurate. Every citation in text must have an associated reference, and there should be no references included that are not cited in text. You must present references in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines set forth in the 7th edition of the publication manual. If you are unsure how to follow these guidelines, please visit this website for examples:

https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples

Appendices

Most of the relevant material should be included in the main text, but in some cases additional or background information should be presented in appendices. Ensure that you enumerate and refer to all appendices in the main text. Suitable content for appendices include: interview schedules, study materials, or questionnaires, additional quotations in the case of qualitative/mixed methods findings, supplementary statistical analyses (where required), supplementary information about sources of secondary datasets, information sheets, consent forms, debriefing sheets, advertisement text. Please DO NOT insert completed consent forms or SPSS output into your appendices. Finally, please ensure that you keep all of the raw data in a safe place.

A useful resource

A library of selected previously completed student projects is kept in the Department. You should refer to these for examples of projects conducted by former students and on the advice of your supervisor. Indeed, this is a good way to help you start thinking about your own research project and to see what the final 'product' should look like in terms of structure, formatting, layout, writing style etc. Contact the Departmental Office to arrange access to this library.

Reminder: Deadline for Submission of Research Project: <u>Thursday 24th February 2022 at 5pm.</u>

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The student's research project will be assessed on the basis of the Project Report. The research report will be assessed independently by two examiners, who come to an agreed mark. As with other submitted pieces of work, all projects are made available to examiners external to the University for further assessment and scrutiny.

To satisfy the examiners, students should have:

1. presented a coherent rationale underpinning their chosen research topic and stated the issue(s)/hypotheses clearly.
2. provided evidence of extensive and appropriate reading, and a review of the relevant literature that is clearly focused on the research topic.
3. selected a system of enquiry, a research design, and data analysis methods that are appropriate for the research topic, and commented effectively upon each of them.
4. conducted the research in a systematic and professional fashion, and presented the results in a coherent and effective manner.
5. drawn appropriate conclusions from the data and argued interpretations incisively.
6. related their findings to the hypotheses/research objectives/issues under investigation and discussed the data within the context of the relevant literature and possible directions for future research.
7. given due consideration to all ethical issues and adhered to the appropriate ethical guidelines.

The outcome of the assessment may be moderated if there is evidence that the supervisor, or another agent, contributed to the project to the extent that the student's independent implementation of the project could be questioned. Evidence of plagiarism will be addressed by following the guidelines laid down by Maynooth University.

IMPORTANT FINAL REMINDER POINTS

The report must be word-processed. PCs are available to students for word-processing at various locations on the University campus. PC's in the Department's Computer Laboratory are NOT available for word-processing.

The length of the report should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words and no more than 30 X A4 pages (excluding references and appendices) unless, as indicated above, the nature of the study is such that a greater number of words/pages is required (up to a maximum of 25% extra) to properly present the research. Size 12 font and double spacing with standard margins should be used throughout. Marks will be deducted if these guidelines are clearly disregarded.

Deadline for Submission of Research Project: <u>Thursday 24th February 2022 at 5pm</u>

Appendices

Appendix I: Research Proposal Form

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Maynooth University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Research Proposal Form

1.	**Student name:**
2.	**Student number:**
3.	**Proposed title of project:**
4.	**Supervisor:**
5.	**Agency supervisor(s)** if applicable:
6.	**Brief literature review (150-200 words):** *This section should provide a brief theoretical and/or empirical justification for your research project.*
7.	**Research objectives and/or hypotheses:**

8.	**Proposed sample size and recruitment strategy**:
9.	**Proposed measures/materials to be used (including questionnaires/interview schedules/topic guides, etc.):** *If you are using an established measure/instrument simply providing the name will suffice with a relevant reference. If the measure/instrument is novel (designed specifically for the project), please attach a copy to the proposal (e.g., if a questionnaire or interview schedule) or provide a detailed description (e.g., if software). If project is a case study, specify the criteria to be used for selection and which analytic concepts will be used.*
10.	**Potential discomfort or inconvenience to participants:** *You should outline any and all ways that your research could cause discomfort or inconvenience to your potential participant.*

11.	**Proposed measures to mitigate discomfort or inconvenience to participants:** *You should specify all the measures you will take to minimize the likelihood that your potential participants will experience any discomfort or inconvenience.*
12.	**Special points or concerns to note:** *Beyond any potential discomfort or inconvenience to participants, you should indicate if there are additional special concerns that need to be addressed. These may include working with vulnerable groups or using measures/instruments of a potentially distressing nature. If so, indicate how you intend to address these within the confines of the ethical guidelines laid down by the professional bodies:*
13.	**Informed consent:** *Specify how potential participants will be informed about the nature of the study prior to data collection.*
14.	**Debriefing participants:** *Specify your procedures for debriefing participants.*
15.	**Copyright law:** *Provide your written assurance that where relevant copyright law will be observed with respect to questionnaires, tests, instruments, computer software, reproduction of literary texts, photographs, art, etc.*

Proposed timetable: *Your timetable should indicate the periods that you intend to devote to the literature review; data collection; data analysis; report writing; and review and editing before submitting your report (if two or more of these activities will occur concurrently, please indicate).*

Information pertaining to collaboration with external agencies:

1. Are you planning to undertake this project with an external agency? (If No, skip to next section).

Yes   No

2. Have you discussed with your supervisor the possibility of undertaking this project with an external agency?

Yes   No

3. Details of the group/agency:

Name:

Address:

Brief description of the function/role of the agency/group:

4. Who is your primary point of contact within the group/agency (include details of their role)?

5. Please outline the specific role of the agency/group in the proposed project:

6. Have you discussed the proposed project and received approval from the appropriate authority within the agency/group?

Yes, approval in principle (but the specifics of the study are yet to be agreed).

Yes, approval in full (the specifics of the study have been agreed)

No

Please justify your selection and where appropriate attach relevant supporting letters/documentation.

7. Detail any permissions/approvals that should be obtained prior starting the research project.

8. How will you debrief the external agency?

Please read each of the following statements and check the box to indicate your agreement.

I have read and I understand the ethical guidelines and codes of conduct of the PSI and BPS and agree to undertake this research with due consideration of ethical issues. ☐

I have completed a Participant Information Sheet and Consent form, in consultation with my supervisor, and have submitted it as part of my proposal. ☐

I have completed the Ethics Checklist for Final Year Projects, in consultation with my supervisor, and have submitted it as part of my proposal. ☐

I understand that I may <u>not</u> undertake any research activities with human participants until such time as my project has been reviewed and approved by the Department. ☐

I [*insert student name*) have read and approve the submission of this Research Project Proposal
Form: ☐

Date:

I [*insert supervisor's name*) have read and approve the submission of this Research Project
Proposal Form: ☐

Date:

Appendix II: SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study. I am [*insert name*], an undergraduate student in the Department of Psychology, Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for my degree, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of [*insert supervisor name*]. The study is concerned with [*keep it brief and simple – 1-2 sentences. There is no need to go into the theoretical complexities of the topic.*]

What will the study involve? The study will involve [*Indicate the procedure and time commitment to the participant, giving the simplest possible explanation and avoiding jargon and unnecessary detail as outlined in your ethical protocol.*]

Who has approved this study? This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from the Research Committee at the Department of Psychology, Maynooth University.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because [*explain why the participant is specifically or generally suitable to provide data for this study*].

Do you have to take part? [*For example]* No, you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this research. However, we hope that you will agree to take part and give us some of your time to [*e.g. complete a short questionnaire, participate in a one-to-one interview with a researcher etc. – as outlined in your ethical protocol*]. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part.

What information will be collected? [*Please detail the type of data to be collected]*

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? [*For example]* Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. All information that you provide will be anonymous and your information will never be identifiable. No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. [Dependent on type of study you may need to edit this section].

What will happen to the information which you give? [*For example/if applicable:*] All the information you provide will be kept in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. Your information will be used to produce a research thesis that is a key component of an undergraduate degree in psychology. A copy of the research findings can be made available to you upon request.

What if there is a problem? You may contact my supervisor *[insert name & email]* if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me: [*Name, Maynooth email address. To protect your own privacy, you should delete this information from the finished report*].

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sample Consent Form [*Amend appropriately for your study***]**

I agree to participate in [researchers *name*]'s research study titled [*title*].

Please tick each statement below [*please delete or amend the statements as appropriate*]:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally and/or in writing. ☐

I am participating voluntarily. ☐

I give permission for my [*insert as appropriate e.g. interview*] with [*name*] to be [*insert as appropriate audio/video-recorded*]. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating. ☐

I understand that my data, in an anonymous format, will be used for research purposes. ☐

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview. ☐

Signed…………………………………….   Date……………….

Participant Name in block capitals ……………………………………………..

I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

Signed…………………………………….   Date……………….

Researcher Name in block capitals ……………………………………………..

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact my supervisor [insert supervisor name and email address].

Two copies to be made: 1 for participant, 1 for student researcher

APPENDIX III: ETHICS CHECKLIST FOR FINAL YEAR PROJECTS

Students should note that this checklist serves as a prompt and is not intended as comprehensive regarding all ethical issues to be addressed in all FYPs. Indeed, some issues may not be relevant or applicable to your particular project (N/A).

Have you?	Yes	N/A
Presented sufficient information on your proposed sample and highlighted any issues relating to potentially vulnerable population (e.g., children)?	☐	☐
Considered all issues if working with children or other vulnerable populations: Garda clearance; parental or third-party informed consent; procedures to ensure voluntary participation (assent) of the individual.	☐	☐
Produced an information sheet and consent form for participants with information and contact details for yourself and the Research Supervisor (do not provide personal contact information).	☐	☐
Ensured participant confidentiality/anonymity, or made it explicitly clear in your report why this is not possible?	☐	☐
Provided sufficient information to potential participants such that they can provide their informed consent?	☐	☐
Ensured that no deception will be used, or made it explicitly clear in your report why this is not possible?	☐	☐
Provided a clear description of how you will debrief participants in your study?	☐	☐
Specified any incentives used to recruit participants?	☐	☐
Read, understood, and adhered to the professional code of ethics for conducting research?	☐	☐
Read, understood, and adhered to the professional code of ethics for conducting internet-mediated research?	☐	☐
Outlined the expected duration of participant involvement (e.g., estimated number of hours/sessions)?	☐	☐
Considered how to avoid identifying any participant or agency either by naming or by provision of information that might reveal identity?	☐	☐

APPENDIX IV: TEMPLATE TITLE PAGE FOR THESIS

- 25 -

Department of Psychology, Maynooth University

Title of Thesis (<=12 words)

Submitted by *Student Name*

Supervisor: *Supervisor's name*

Date of submission (Month, Year)

Thesis Presented in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements for the BA/BSc Honours Degree in Psychology, Maynooth University

Word Count: Enter final word count