UNIVERSITY OF THE **FREE STATE**
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE **VRYSTAAT**
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Request for permission to conduct research

[This request for permission to conduct research is a public-facing document that must be clear, professional, and easy to read. Attention should be given to grammar, font size, and overall formatting to ensure accessibility for all. The final form should be professionally presented and language edited. The UFS provides all postgraduate students with access to Grammarly.

Remember that you are asking an organisation to participate AND/OR that their members/employees should participate. What you are asking and from whom should be clear to the reader. The letter should speak directly to the reader, using clear and respectful language. For example, use phrases such as: "Your organisation and its employees are invited to take part in this study …" This direct approach helps participants understand their role and rights in the study.

All instructions and explanations are in square brackets and should be addressed if applicable or deleted if not applicable. Anything outside the square brackets are elements that are part of the consent form.]

Dear [Insert the title and name of the institution/organisation's contact person]

I am doing research and would like to request permission to conduct our research at [Insert institution/organisation's/company's name].

Date

[Date of research project]

Title of the research project
[Insert the title of the research project.]

Researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):

[remove the plural (s) if not applicable]

Name of student/researcher Student number Contact number

Faculty and department:

Name of faculty

Name of department

Study leader's(s') name and contact number:

[remove the plural (s) if not applicable]

Name of study leader (UFS staff member)
Contact number [Only include office phone numbers, unless you have the supervisor's consent to add their cellphone number.]

What is the aim/purpose of the study?

[Explain the aim of the study and why you are conducting the study. Do not copy from your proposal, as this should be a simple explanation that the participants will understand.]

Who is doing the research?

[Identify yourself and explain who you work for and/or why you are doing the project.

The researcher should identify themselves by writing their full name. They should also explain who they are working for – for example, whether they are conducting the research as part of their job (staff research) or as part of their studies (e.g., for a university degree). This information should be clearly stated so that participants understand who is doing the research and why.

University students should avoid professionalising the consent form by including their job title or the name of the organisation where they work, unless their job title or employer could be perceived as a conflict of interest, in which case the relationship should be explained, and any fears alleviated or unfulfilled expectations discussed. This helps ensure that participants do

not feel pressured to participate in the study based on the student's professional position or authority.]

Has the study received ethical approval?

This study has received approval from the General Human Research Ethics Committee of the UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: [Insert approval number]

Why is your [institution/organisation/company, choose appropriate] invited to take part in this research project?

[Why did you choose this particular organisation for your research? Remember that sometimes it is not about the organisation but about the members/employees of the organisation that you are interested in.

Researchers should speak directly to the reader.]

Your organisation/members/employees [be clear if it is a specific subset of their employees/members] are invited to take part in this study because you/they are part of a group that can help us better understand [insert topic or issue being studied].
I am inviting approximately [insert number] people to take part in the study. Participants will be selected because [insert reason, e.g., they meet certain criteria, have specific experience, belong to a particular group, etc.].

What is the nature of participation in this study?

[You should distinguish between what you are asking from the reader/their organisation and what you are asking from their employees/members. Describe the reader's organisation and/or the participant's actual role in the study, avoiding any technical terms that would not be appropriate for the reader. The reader must be clear about what they are agreeing to. Indicate what sort of questions will be asked or show the questions in this document. Describe the expected duration of participation and the time needed to complete specific research activities such as questionnaires, focus groups, or interviews. Describe the time allocated to conduct interviews/focus groups – be realistic in your approximation.

Clearly indicate what you are asking from the organisation. This may include documents, contact information, access to observe what happens in the organisation, access to their employees/members/clients or a representative of the organisation, assistance with recruitment and/or data collection. Remember that this should all align with your application.

Clearly indicate whether participants (who are representatives/members/employees/clients) will be involved in only one form of data collection or multiple (such as interviews and observations). Describe each method of participation separately and ensure that the procedures, duration, and data collection tools are clearly explained. Readers should not be reading about anything that they, their organisation, or their members/employees/clients will not be participating in.]

If your organisation agrees to participate in this study, please indicate so in a letter. The letter should ideally be on the [company/organisation] letterhead and signed by an appropriate person whose role in the [company/organisation] is noted in the letter.

Your [members/employees/clients] will be asked questions about [briefly describe the topic, e.g., their experiences with ..., their views on ..., their knowledge of ...].

Their participation will take approximately [insert duration, e.g., 30-45 minutes for interviews, 10-15 minutes for questionnaires, etc.].

[In some cases, the organisation may wish to see the research proposal. It would be appropriate to share the research proposal if they ask for it, but the technical language of the proposal is not appropriate for the general population.]

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

[Describe the presence or absence of realistic possible benefits for participants and/or society. Do not overstate benefits that may result or create expectations that you cannot fulfil in the time and with the resources available.]

There may be no direct personal benefits to your [organisation and members/employees/clients] for taking part in this study. However, your participation will help us gain a better understanding of [insert topic], which may help improve [insert area of impact – e.g., services, policies, practices, etc.] in the future. This could benefit other individuals or groups in similar situations.

What are the potential risks of taking part in this study?

[Describe any potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. List all possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side effects to the potential participants, outlining likely incidence and severity. The risks identified in the risk section of the application form should be clearly reflected and discussed in this section to ensure consistency, and mitigations should be provided. Describe the measures that will be taken if injury or harm

attributable to the study occurs. If applicable, add a description of any arrangements for indemnity and/or insurance coverage for participants.

Example (only applicable if the risk-benefit section has highlighted the potential loss of study time or emotional distress):] Taking part in this study may require some time away from work for your employees, but we will make sure that the activities [interviews/focus group sessions, questionnaire, observation, etc.] are scheduled at a time that is convenient and reduces disruptions. If your [representative/members/employees] feel uncomfortable or upset at any point, they are free to stop. A counsellor will be available to assist them should they experience any emotional discomfort [contact details should be provided: attach a letter from the counsellor stating that they are aware and that they will be able to assist for free].

Will the information be kept confidential?

[Include only the information that aligns with your chosen data collection method. Do not mention, for instance, focus groups if your study involves only interviews. Remember that you need to address the confidentiality of the organisation AND its members as appropriate. In some cases, it will be impossible to hide which organisation took part. It should be explicitly addressed if this is the case, and no promises can be made of anonymity in final reports or publications.

Examples:

Company:] Your organisation's name or any identifiable information will not be in the final report. The information you share with us will only be used for research purposes and will not be shared with anyone else.

[Interviews:] Your [representatives'/members'/employees'] names will not be recorded anywhere, and their responses will be kept confidential. Instead of their real names, we will use codes or pseudonyms. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate reporting, but only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the recordings. Your [members'/employees'] data may also be reviewed by the university's Research Ethics Committee as part of their responsibility to ensure that the research is conducted properly. All recordings and transcripts will be stored securely. The anonymised responses may be used in other academic work, such as journal publications, research reports, or conference presentations, but your [representatives/members/employees] will not be personally identified in any of these outputs. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in any way. Participation is completely voluntary. Your [representatives/members/employees] do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to, and you can stop at any time without giving a reason and without facing any penalty or consequence.

[Focus Group Discussions:] The focus group discussion will be audio-recorded for accuracy. Your [representatives'/members'/employees'] names will not be used in any report or publication. However, please note that while the researcher will treat all information as confidential, confidentiality among group members cannot be guaranteed. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that your [representatives/members/employees] will not be connected to the information they share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I would,

however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise your [representatives/members/employees] not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. We will use pseudonyms in any reports and exclude identifying information. A report may be submitted for publication, but your [representatives'/members'/employees'] identity will not be revealed. Your [representatives/members/employees] do not have to take part in this study if they do not want to, and they can stop at any time without giving a reason and without facing any penalty or consequence.

[Observations:] The observation will be video recorded to help us remember what happened more accurately [if applicable]. If we plan to record the observation, we will first ask for your [representatives'/members'/employees'] permission. They can say no to being recorded and still take part in the study. We will not use their name in any notes or reports. Everything we collect will be kept safe and private. Only the researcher and the supervisor will be able to see the information. If the study is shared through a report, journal article, or presentation, we will make sure that no one can tell that it is your [representatives/members/employees]. Your [representatives/members/employees] do not have to take part in this study if they do not want to, and they can stop at any time without giving a reason and without facing any penalty or consequence.

Questionnaires: The questionnaire will not ask for your [representatives'/members'/employees'] name, and their answers will remain anonymous [do not promise anonymity if you know who completed which questionnaire, as this is confidentiality, not anonymity]. Once they have submitted their responses, it will not be possible to withdraw their answers, because there will be no way to identify which ones are theirs. Only the researcher and supervisor will access the data. The anonymised responses may be used in research reports, journal articles, or conference presentations. A report may be submitted for publication, but no one will be able to identify your [representatives/members/employees] from it. They do not have to take part in this study if they do not want to, and they can stop at any time without giving a reason and without facing any penalty or consequence.

[Additionally, this may be applicable to fieldwork assistants, transcribers, or statisticians:] If a transcriber or an external coder is used to assist with data processing, they will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that your privacy is protected (attach the letter from the statistician or transcriber).

How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?

Hard copies of answers [only if there will be hard copies such as pen-and-paper questionnaires, notes, or observations] and the signed consent forms will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years [if the data will be retained longer or permanently, this must be stated] in a locked filing cabinet located in the [insert specific location, e.g., Department of Psychology office at XYZ University]. Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer/online on [if applicable, specifically state which POPIA-compliant cloud data collection and storage solutions you will use] that meets POPIA security standards, accessible only to the researcher and the research supervisor.

After the five-year storage period, all hard-copy documents will be securely shredded, and all electronic files will be permanently deleted from the system. [If any data will be kept longer than this, explain what data will be kept and state when and how it will be deidentified.]

If the data is considered for future use (for academic or research purposes), this will only occur with additional ethical clearance and approval from a recognised research ethics committee. Your [representatives'/members'/employees'] information will remain confidential and anonymised in all future uses.

Will there be payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

[Describe any payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise. Any costs incurred by the participant should be explained and justified. Add a description of any arrangements for indemnity and/or insurance coverage for participants, if applicable.]

[Example when there is a small payment for participation:] Your [representatives/members/employees] will receive a small reimbursement to cover their transport costs, as well as some refreshments during the study sessions. This is to make it easier for them to take part and to thank them for their time. This reimbursement is not meant to pressure or force them to participate – joining the study is completely their choice.

[Example when there is no payment:] Your [representatives/members/employees] will not receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and if they choose not to take part, they will not lose any benefits or rights.

How will the [institution/organisation/company] be informed of the findings/results of the study?

If you or your [organisation] would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact [insert researcher's name] on [insert telephone number] or [insert email address]. The findings are accessible for [insert time frame]. [Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or cell numbers are acceptable.] Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact [insert principal researcher's contact details here, including email and internal phone number]. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research was conducted, you may contact [insert supervisor's contact details here, including email and internal phone number]. You can contact the university's General Human Research Ethics Committee at [ethics contact details]. They are there to help you.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name and signature of the researcher]

[Insert name, designation, and signature of the supervisor, if appropriate]
