Requirements of the Plain Language Statement

In the plain language statement, the project should be described so that potential participants, after reading the description, will be able to choose freely whether to participate in the project. The written description should contain the following information:

**Researcher Details**

Clear identification of the:
1. University (statement to be printed on University letterhead);
2. Department or departments involved;
3. Project title;
4. Principal (and other) investigator(s) (including contact numbers for these);
5. Supervisor, if it is a student research project;
6. Degree for which the research is being undertaken, if it is a student research project.

**Procedures/Risks**

- An explanation, in language that the participants will understand, of the aim of the project and the procedures to be followed (e.g., surveys, interviews, video-taping, audio-taping, blood testing, etc.). This should include a description of what participants are expected to do if participating in the project, the anticipated time involved, and any possible risks, discomfort or inconvenience resulting from these procedures. If children are the participants in research a statement should be provided for them in language they can understand as well as a statement suitable for their parents/guardian.

**No Prejudice**

- If provision of services, benefits, medical treatment, education or other care is involved, a clear statement that involvement or non-involvement in the project will not affect ongoing management, treatment, assessment/results or employment situation.

**Right to Withdraw**

1. A clear indication that participation in the project is voluntary, and that participants may withdraw consent to participate and discontinue participation at any time until data become processed. Participants should also be advised that they may, if they wish, withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;
2. Participants must be informed that withdrawing from the research will not jeopardise their relationship with the researchers in any way (e.g., teacher/student relationship; medical treatment);
3. A participant must be free at any time to withdraw consent to further involvement in the research. If any consequences may arise from such withdrawal, advice must be given to participants about these before consent to involvement in the research is obtained.

**Confidentiality Procedures/Data use and Storage**

1. Details of the anticipated use of the data (e.g., thesis, publication, whether copies of reports will be given to participants, sponsors etc.);
2. An explanation of procedures adopted to ensure confidentiality of data. Participants should also be advised of limits to confidentiality - i.e. subject to legal requirements, requirement to report by some professions (mandatory reporting requirements), duty of care to third party etc. Information about how the data will be used should also be included and, where necessary, the steps to be taken to ensure that participants will not be identified. (For example, if case histories are to be written up in a report of the research, a statement will need to be included to indicate that information will be disguised by use of pseudonyms or other devices so that identification of the participant will not be possible).

**Funding**

- Identification of funding bodies and sponsors of the research needs to be included.

**Further Assistance**

Outlining:
1. An offer to answer any questions and a contact name and telephone number if any further explanation is required;
2. Arrangements for debriefing or follow-up where this is necessary to secure the well-being of participants;
3. A statement that if participants have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project that they can contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au.

**Plain Language Statement Checklist**

Confirm that the Plain Language Statement:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Clearly identify the University of Melbourne (i.e. by prominent placement of the University’s logo) and the department(s)/school(s)/faculty(ies) involved. If printed, the PLS should be on University of Melbourne letterhead.  

2. Clearly identify the title of the project, and the name(s) and contact details of the Principal Researcher and Other Researchers. For student projects, specify the student’s level of study.  

3. Clearly explain the purpose of the research project.  

4. Clearly explain what participants will be asked to do and provide an estimated time commitment.  

5. If participants will be photographed, audio- or video-recorded, clearly state as much.  

6. Clearly explain any risks arising from participation, as well as any procedures or measures in place to minimise such risks.  

7. Describe the expected benefits to the wider community. If applicable, also describe any expected benefits to participants.
8. List any payments, incentives or reimbursements to be made to participants.

9. State that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from participation at any time. Explain any implications of withdrawal, including whether it will be possible for participants to withdraw any data already collected from or about them.

10. Describe the likelihood and form of dissemination of the research results, including publication.

11. Describe the arrangements in place to protect the confidentiality of participants’ data and advise participants of any legal limitations to such confidentiality. If the sample size for the project is small, advise participants that this may make them identifiable.

12. The project HREC number (which is the ethics ID number assigned by Themis) and the date and version number of the PLS must appear on the PLS. If the PLS is printed, put this information in the footer.

13. Explain what will happen to participants’ data after the research project ends (i.e. how long it will be retained, whether it might be used again for future research and if so who would have access.)

14. Include the following statement: “This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.”

15. If the research is externally funded, state the amount(s) and source(s) of funding for the research.

16. If there are any potential conflicts of interest for any of the researchers, sponsors (if applicable) or institutions, disclose these potential conflicts of interest.

17. If any participants will be in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers, state that decisions about participation will not affect the dependent relationship. (E.g. students’ grades will not be affected if they decline to participate or withdraw from the project at any stage).
Note to applicants:

- This sample statement is NOT a prescribed statement. It is indicative of the kind of information which should be included in a Plain Language Statement.
- The project discussed is fictional and is intended to give an idea about how you could word your plain language statement and how to include all the required information. The essential points for inclusion can be found in the checklist on the previous page.
- If your project takes a different approach to confidentiality and anonymity. You can view example alternate descriptions of confidentiality arrangements at http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/humanethics/external/
- The letterhead for Plain Language Statements can be found at: http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/ethics/

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT [Sample Letter Model]

"Explaining the ethics process: communicating procedures to applicants"

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr Jane Doe (supervisor) and Mr John Smith (Honours student) of the Department of Communications at The University of Melbourne. Your name and contact details have been drawn at random from a database of former applicants for ethics approval, with the permission of the General Manager of the Melbourne Research Office. This project will form part of Mr Smith’s honours thesis and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the instructions and information provided by the ethics web page regarding consent forms needs to be improved, and if so, in what ways. Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute to this in two ways. First, we would ask you to look at the ethics web site and complete a 5-minute questionnaire, at a time convenient to you. This questionnaire would ask you to indicate your reactions to the web site, and your opinion of its efficacy in conveying information. Second, we would ask you to participate in a brief interview of about 15 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what improvements could be made. With your permission, the interview would be tape-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the tape has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the time commitment required of you would not exceed 30 minutes.

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Department of Communications. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. The data will be kept securely in the Department of Communications for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for you to view the web site and to complete the questionnaire and interview.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the research team - Dr Doe: 8344 1234 or Mr Smith: 6546 4564. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

Yours … etc.

Dr Jane Doe (Supervisor) Mr. John Smith (Honours Student)

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia
W: education.unimelb.edu.au | unimelb.edu.au

Ethics Id. XXXXXXX; Date: 7/05/18; Version: X X
Note to applicants:

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- The project discussed is fictional and is intended to give an idea about how you could word your plain language statement and how to include all the required information. The essential points for inclusion can be found in the checklist on the previous page.
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**PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT** [Sample Subheading Model]

*Project: “Explaining the ethics process: communicating procedures to applicants”*

**Introduction**

Your name and contact details have been drawn at random from a database of former applicants for ethics approval with the permission of the General Manager of the Melbourne Research Office, as someone who has experience in applying for ethics approval, we would like to invite you to participate in our research project. The aim of the study is to investigate whether the instructions and information provided by the ethics webpage needs to be improved, and if so, in what ways. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne.

**What will I be asked to do?**

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute in two ways. First, we would ask you to look at the ethics web site and complete a 5-minute questionnaire, at a time convenient to you. This questionnaire would ask you to indicate your reactions to the web site, and your opinion of its efficacy in conveying information. Second, we would ask you to participate in a brief interview of about 15 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what improvements could be made. With your permission, the interview would be tape-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the tape has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the total time commitment required of you would not exceed 30 minutes.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where we should send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you. The data will be kept securely in the Department of Communications for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

**How will I receive feedback?**

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Department of Communications. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences.

**Will participation prejudice me in any way?**

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. The researchers are not involved in the ethics application process. Your decision to participate or not, or to withdraw, will be completely independent of your dealings with the ethics committee, and we would like to assure you that it will have no effect on any applications for approval that you may submit.

**Where can I get further information?**

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the research team on the numbers given below. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

**How do I agree to participate?**

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for you to view the web site and to complete the questionnaire and interview.

**Dr. John Somebody (Supervisor)**  
ph: 8344 0000  
email: j.somebody@unimelb.edu.au

**Ms. Jane Smith (Honours Student)**  
ph: 6546 4564  
email: j.smith1@unimelb.edu.au

**Melbourne Graduate School of Education**  
Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia  
W: education.unimelb.edu.au  |  unimelb.edu.au
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PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT [Sample for Primary School Aged Children]

"What do grade five children in public schools know about politics?"

Hello! My name is Jane Smith. I am a student at the University of Melbourne. I am doing a project to find out what people your age know about politics. When I finish my project, it will be part of my degree, called a "PhD". My teacher, Dr John Somebody, helps me with my project. He is called my "supervisor". We both work in "the Department of Political Science".

Your school principal and your teacher have given me permission to send you this letter to tell you a bit about my project. Once you have read the letter you can decide if you would like to take part. You should talk to your parents about the project too.

If you want to be part of the project, I would ask you to read and answer some questions about politics, using a booklet. You and all the other people from your class who are taking part would go into a spare room for about 30 minutes to read the questions and write answers. I will be there to explain about the questions and collect the answers at the end. If you want to stop doing the questions, you can tell me and go back to the classroom any time you like. If you don’t know an answer, or you don’t want to answer a question, that’s fine too. The rest of your class will be doing silent reading with your teacher.

Only my supervisor and I will see your answers, so please don’t worry that your teacher might look at them. The project will have nothing to do with your school report or your grade for SOSE. You don’t even have to write your name on the booklet, so no one will be able to tell which answers yours are.

After the project is over, I will lock all the booklets away safely in the Department of Political Science for 5 years. I must do this because it is a University rule. After that my supervisor will destroy them.

Remember, you don’t have to take part unless you want to. If you have any questions you should talk to your teacher or a parent. If they don’t know the answer to your question, they can contact me, or my supervisor, or the Research Ethics Office at the University for you.

If you want to be part of my project, and your parent/s agree, please sign your name on the next page where it says "student" and get your parent or guardian to sign as well.

Yours … etc.

Dr. John Somebody (Supervisor)  Ms. Jane Smith (Honours Student)
ph. 8344 0000    ph: 6546 4564
email: j.somebody@unimelb.edu.au    email: j.smith1@unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia
W: education.unimelb.edu.au    |    unimelb.edu.au

Ethics Id. XXXXXXX; Date: 7/05/18; Version: X.X
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PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT [Sample for Secondary School Aged Children]

[INSERT Title of Study]

Dear Participant,

(1) What is the study about?

This study is about [in lay terms relevant to the audience, provide a brief description of the aims and objectives of the study, including what you expect to achieve].

(2) Who is doing the study?

The study is being run by [INSERT name of researchers] at The University of Melbourne.

At the end of the paragraph insert: “This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne.”

(3) What do I have to do?

[Describe in lay terms relevant to the audience what the study involves for the participant. The participant must be in a position to give fully informed consent e.g.
- Does it involve audio/video taping, procedures, questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, interviews, return of questionnaires?
- Indicate the location of study, focus groups/interviews.
- Indicate what is to be expected (i.e the nature of activities, types of questions asked, line of discussion in focus groups, what is involved in any procedures, frequency, etc).
- Describe the nature and level of any risks to which the participant might be exposed if they were to take part.
- Describe appropriate alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the participant, if any. Any standard treatment that is being withheld must also be disclosed.]

(4) How much time will it take?

[Describe how much time this study involved for the participant i.e. time to complete questionnaire/surveys, time allocated to conduct interviews/focus groups etc.]

(5) Do I have to do the study?

It is your choice to take part or not to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part, you can still choose to pull out if you wish.

[Paragraph for Interviews – if applicable]
You can stop the interview at any time and any information you have given the researchers will not be used in the study.
[Paragraph for Focus Groups – if applicable]
If you are taking part in a group discussion and you wish to pull out, because you have been part of a group the information you have given up to that point will still be included in the study.

[Paragraph for the return of questionnaires/survey if not having a consent form – if applicable]
You can choose to fill in the form or not to. If you do fill in the form, you can still choose not to give your answers to the researchers. If you have already given your answers to the researchers and the form does not have your name on it, you cannot take back your answers.

(6) Will anyone else know?

The researchers may write a report about this study, but you will not be named in the report and only the researchers will know your answers.

(7) Do I get anything for being part of the study?

[If there is any direct financial or non-financial benefit, describe the amount or nature. If there is a possibility of additional costs because of participation, describe them. If no benefits are expected include the following statement: “You will not get anything for being part of the study”]

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

This how will you give them feedback once the research has been completed. A brief summary of the findings is advisable to all participants. Also mention if the results will be presented at a conference, in a journal etc.

(9) What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions you can contact [INSERT name of investigator] and they will be happy to help you.

(10) What if I am not happy with the study?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the research team on the numbers given below. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

This information sheet is for you to keep. Yours ... etc.

Dr. John Somebody (Supervisor)        Ms. Jane Smith (Honours Student)
ph. 8344 0000                           ph: 6546 4564
email: j.somebody@unimelb.edu.au         email: j.smith1@unimelb.edu.au
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT [Indigenous Community Model]

To members of the X community

Researchers:
Dr. John Somebody (Supervisor)  
Ms. Jane Smith (Honours Student)
ph. 8344 0000  
ph: 6546 4564
email: j.somebody@unimelb.edu.au  
email: j.smith1@unimelb.edu.au

I am interested in looking at how the X people use their country and what is the history of X country.

First, I want to listen to your stories about how country is used today and how the old people used the country in the past. I want to learn these stories and other things such as bush tucker, old people, camping places and paintings in country. I do not want to know any secret sacred things and I do not want to go to any sacred places. I understand that these things are special and that I do not need to know them. I only want to know everyday things that are important for being in country and for looking after country.

I would like to visit the places where the old people camped, and I may want to dig at these places so that we can know how the old people used the camping sites. So that I can understand X country for people now and the old people I will ask questions about country. The questions will be like these:
- What can you tell me about X country?
- How did the old people talk about country?
- Did the old people say what the country was like a long time ago?
- What was the country like when you were young?
- Is X country different now?
- What things are important for looking after country?

When I ask these questions, I will write down some of the things you say. I will keep these things private. People are free to talk to me for as long as they like and if they don’t want to talk they don’t have to.

I want to understand how important country is to X people. I want X people to be part of this project, I want us to work together and I want to learn about the old people and the places they used to go.

If people have any concerns they should telephone the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, phone: (03) 8344 2073.

Thank you,

Dr. John Somebody and Ms. Jane Smith

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia
W: education.unimelb.edu.au  |  unimelb.edu.au

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PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT [English as Second Language Model]

Note to applicants
This Plain Language Statement was produced for those community members for whom English was a second language. The English translation and format of the statement has been reproduced below.

Project: “The X people: Their history and use of the X country”

To members of the X community

[Statement in the language of participants in the community [not reproduced]]

Translation:
Hello there, I am Y, last year I spoke with you when you were there in Brisbane. At that time, I asked you if it was OK if I came north to your country, so I could learn about it. I would like to learn about the old people where they used to travel over the land and the sea, and what meat and plant foods they used to eat and where they used to camp in the wet season and the dry season. I would also like to ask you about how you feel about your land and sea and where you hunt and camp.

I am asking also if it is alright to put these things in a book and make a book about your stories. Do not talk to me about secret and sacred things only those things that anyone can know, I do not want to go to secret and sacred country I only want to go to country where any one is free to go. I will come when I get the money together. Once again, I thank you.

Researchers:
Dr. John Somebody (Supervisor) Ms. Jane Smith (Honours Student)
ph. 8344 0000 ph: 6546 4564
email: j.somebody@unimelb.edu.au email: j.smith1@unimelb.edu.au
Note to applicants:

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PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT, CONSENT and FURTHER EXPLANATION [Specific Cultural Groups Model]

Note to applicants
The following Plain Language Statement was developed for research into Islamic communities living in Melbourne, taking into account the specific religious and cultural expectations of that group. Below you can read the researchers explanation of why the “consent “form and plain language statement were rejoined, and a description of the reasons for other variations from the normal format.

Project Title: “Islamic School Curriculum Project”

Dear Parents,

We are seeking your help for a research project on the curriculum of Islamic schools. Dr. John Somebody from the University of Melbourne is in charge of the project team. This project is being funded by the Faculty of Education and has been approved by the University’s ethics committee. The school principal of this Islamic school has agreed to take part in this research project.

The education of children is very important to Muslim parents. The research team would like to talk to parents from Islamic schools about what they think are the important things their children should be taught at school. This research will give parents an opportunity to express their ideas about the education of their children. We are inviting parents who are interested, to take part in a small discussion group at the school. The discussion will last for about 45 minutes and will be audio-taped so it can be translated into English. The groups will be conducted in Turkish or Arabic and English. These are the kind of questions we will be discussing:

- Why did you choose an Islamic school for your children?
- What do parents think about the teaching and learning in Islamic schools?
- What you think should not be included in the school curriculum?

If you are willing to take part in these discussions, please fill in your name on the form attached and return it to your child's school as soon as possible. A member of the research team will contact you to arrange the discussion group time. If you wish to ask any questions about this project, please contact Dr. John Somebody at The University of Melbourne. His telephone number is 03 83441234.

We hope you will participate in this important study on the Islamic School curriculum.

Thank you,
Dr. John Somebody and Ms. Jane Smith

I would like to take part in a small group discussion on the curriculum in Islamic schools.

Name: ...........................................................................................................................................................................
My child's name: ...................................................................................................................................................................
Grade: ..................................................................................................................................................................................
My telephone number is: ..................................................................................................................................................................
The best day for me is: ............................................................................................................................................................
The best time for me is: ............................................................................................................................................................

Please underline the language group(s) you prefer.
I would like to be in an English-speaking group/ Turkish speaking group/ Arabic speaking group.
Note to applicants:

- This sample statement is NOT a prescribed statement. It is indicative of the kind of information which should be included in a Plain Language Statement.
- The project discussed is fictional and is intended to give an idea about how you could word your plain language statement and how to include all the required information. The essential points for inclusion can be found in the checklist on the previous page.
- If your project takes a different approach to confidentiality and anonymity, you can view example alternate descriptions of confidentiality arrangements at http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/humanethics/external/
- The letterhead for Plain Language Statements can be found at: http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/ethics/

Note to applicants
This explanatory attachment was submitted with the above Plain Language Statement in order to justify changes to the normal format.

"Islamic School Curriculum Project"

Project Explanation

Research with non-English speaking immigrant communities requires a greater sensitivity than research with so-called “mainstream communities”. The model suggested by the ethics form is inadequate in addressing particular questions.

Firstly, there is the question of language. Imperfect knowledge of English or lack of confidence in either spoken or written communication means that researchers need to work in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways. NESB informants are always more fluent, confident and accurate in their own language; that is why the use of bi-lingual consultations is preferred by this researcher. Several years of research within such communities and supervision of post-graduate students working with NESB informants has confirmed that bi-lingual consultations are appropriate. As a consequence of translating information into other languages, it is necessary to formulate requests, consents and plain language statements in culturally appropriate ways. The University's ethics form stresses concepts such as informed consent and legal limitations to confidentiality. While these are understood by native English-speaking academics, in translation, they have implications and meanings quite different from those intended by the designers of the form. In fact, they may reflect or suggest something more intimidating and less protective. Accordingly, in this research project both the plain language statement and consent form will be modified to reflect these cultural differences.

Secondly, the question of culturally appropriate behaviours needs to be addressed. The culture implicit in the ethics form is western, dominated by a scientific world-view but influenced by Judea-Christian beliefs. It demonstrates a different understanding of community, collectivism and individualism, and therefore ownership of knowledge. For example, Muslim communities have a concept of ummah or community which seeks consensus on matters of belief and interpretation and which generally lacks a hierarchy of power or influence. Group interviews are therefore highly appropriate, and participants know they are speaking as equals. The question of legal limitations to confidentiality is inconceivable because what has been said is not confidential. Many Muslim parents will volunteer to participate in bi-lingual consultations on Islamic schools, but only those who turn up to the agreed consultation can be considered to have consented. They would be puzzled and perhaps intimidated by the requirement to complete a consent form. In my research over the past decade I have had people withdraw from bi-lingual consultations because such a consent form has suggested interference from outside authorities such as police, tax officials or government. Viewed from a Muslim perspective, such a form may question both their sincerity and competence to participate in the process. As a researcher within the Muslim community, I am conscious that my culturally appropriate behaviour (i.e. acknowledgment of Islamic culture, manner of dress, attention to gender separation, use of non-verbal communication etc.) will ensure participation. Trust and familiarity with the community are essential components for such research. The perceived intervention of a third party such as official looking forms will not benefit this research or the Muslim community.

Although I will ensure that participants have agreed to participate and will ensure that they are not identified as individuals in subsequent reports or publications, I will do this in a culturally appropriate manner i.e. in simplified English, minus technical terms and without the official-looking format.