Research Guidance Note 4
NOVI Online survey tool

The following guidance is issued to help researchers to consider the ethical issues and to plan the use of online questionnaires as a research tool.

Anonymity for participants should be considered a priority and the confidentiality of the participant should be respected

Empirical research strongly supports the view that anonymity is important in survey research to obtain honest and accurate data, particularly in relation to sensitive or personal topics.

Informed consent must be demonstrated

As with all research, participant information explaining the purpose of the study and how the data collected together with the process of documenting informed consent must be demonstrated. To apply these fundamental elements to online research tools, the first question of any online questionnaire should establish that the participant has read the information and given their informed consent. If answered negatively, the online software will take the participant to a 'Thank you page' and give no opportunity to complete the survey.

The researcher has a responsibility to alert the participant to the point at which they may withdraw, after which all data will be fully anonymised and therefore untraceable

In any research study there comes a point where withdrawal is no longer feasible and it is misleading to suggest to participants that withdrawal at any time is in fact achievable. Whilst this is technically possible, the researcher may require additional expertise to identify data from individual participants and remove this.

    a.   In the case of online questionnaires, there are two main options available to researchers and this information needs to be included in the participant information sheet:

        i.   The point of withdrawal is at the point of submission. The participant can no longer withdraw their data after this time.

        ii.   The point of withdrawal is at the point of submission in the first instance; however the participant has the

option to withdraw their data at a later date specified by the researcher in the information sheet.

b. **At the end of the survey the researcher should highlight the point of withdrawal again**. Information should indicate that once 'data' has been submitted it will no longer be possible to withdraw from the study or the date for withdrawal and withdrawal procedure is clearly indicated. This information may be included on the 'Thank you for your participation page'.

After all questions have been answered a second opportunity for participants to confirm their consent should be given. Good practice would suggest that any semi-completed questionnaires without the confirmation of consent at the end of the questionnaire will not be included in the study. This would call into question the validity of the consent process.

NOVI is the University's approved online survey software

The University offers staff and students the use of NOVI, a web-based survey application to facilitate the gathering and analysis of data from different audiences, for the purposes of both evaluation and research, either on or off campus. This application reduces the cost of gathering data, facilitates the tracking of respondents to send reminders and eliminates the task of entering data.

Roles and responsibilities for using NOVI

Information Services (IS) will maintain and enhance the survey application and be responsible for the creation of staff and student accounts.

• Edinburgh Napier University's Research Integrity Committee (URIC) will promote the governance of the ethical approval process and good practice and approve any School processes for implementation, as appropriate.

• Every researcher will be required to comply with the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity, Data Protection Code of Practice and any other relevant policies and procedures.

Availability of NOVI	NOVI will be made available to all Edinburgh Napier University staff and students, whose use of the application for research or assessment activities has received the necessary ethical approval. NOVI may be also be used by staff or students who are involved in purely evaluation activity.
	Good practice in both evaluation and research activity will ensure that participants understand the purposes of the study, what will happen to their data, whom it may be shared with and whether any findings will be published.
Limitations on NOVI use	It is good practice to ensure that sample populations are not over-surveyed and therefore normally no individual should be surveyed more than once in any 15 working day period.
Assuring adherence to guidelines for research involving human subjects	If data from student records is to be used in assessment research, all requirements of the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's Data Protection Code of Practice must be met.
	Non-public, student data may be used without the student's consent by University employees for approved educational purposes provided that the data has been fully anonymised in accordance with the UK Information Commissioner's Guidance to ensure that individual students cannot be identified.
	All other proposed uses of personal data must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's Data Protection Code of Practice.
Requesting access to NOVI	Staff: All staff will have automatic user rights to create a web based survey using NOVI but will be required to obtain ethical approval where necessary.
	Students: Students seeking use of the application should first contact their programme leader or research supervisor to discuss their research proposal. Where ethical approval is required, this must be obtained in accordance with the policy and processes of the respective School Research Integrity Committee.

All staff and students who are proposing to use NOVI should consult this work flow chart, which is available from Mynapier website[18].

NOVI's Terms of use

The current version of NOVI is an authenticated system which links users to surveys. In order to use this application all users must comply with this Guidance and the following University policies, Codes and guidance:

• Information Security Policies
• Code of Practice on Research Integrity
• Use of Personal Data in Research
• Social Media Usage Policy

Misuse of the NOVI application

Where staff or students are found to have breached this Guidance or any relevant University policies, Codes or guidance, this may result in their access to NOVI being suspended, removed and/or disciplinary action being taken.

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[18] NOVI survey support available from http://my.napier.ac.uk/IT/YourITServices/Pages/NoviSurvey.aspx [last accessed December 2015]