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**Cover Letter Instructions**

Please read the following instructions carefully. Modify this template for use in your own research and submit the final version to the IRB for review. Other templates are provided on the [IRB Forms](https://oric.research.wvu.edu/services/human-subjects/forms) page of the WVU OHRP website. If you have any questions, please contact the WVU OHRP at 304-293-7073 or at IRB@mail.wvu.edu.

* Anything in red should be completed with information specifically for your study. Purple text provides instructions for specific sections and identified required and additional elements of informed consent that are required when appropriate. Please note that you can modify language as applicable to your study.
* When finished, please remove the remaining instructions including the **purple** text and make all of the **red** text black to match the rest of the document.
* Text not applicable to your study and highlighting of text should beremoved from the template **before** submitting it for review.
* **Remove the instruction page from the final version of your Cover Letter.**
* **Save and upload the final version as a pdf document as applicable.**
* Upon review and approval, the system will watermark each page of the PDF file. The watermark will contain the approval/acknowledgement date and the expiration date, along with the protocol number.

**Key Points:**

* Your cover letter should be as concise as possible yet still provide participants with the information needed to obtain “informed consent”. This should be important information, about your study, that a participant would want to know. A cover letter should be one page.
* A Waiver of Documentation of Consent is awarded for projects utilizing a cover letter.
* Utilize the wording “Acknowledgement” or “Approval” depending on your protocol type submission. Exempt and NHSR protocols should use “acknowledgment.” Flex and Expedited should use “approval.”

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**Cover Letter Guidance**

**Introduction and Purpose**

Tell the reader who you are and explain your affiliation with WVU. Explain that you are inviting them to participate in a research study. This should also include any inclusion criteria for the project or why they are being asked to participate. If you are a student, disclose that you are completing this project as a part of your degree, and include information about the degree that you are working on. If the study is being conducted to fulfill degree requirements, state this. If you are a professor, please state your department. Describe the purpose of the study. Include sponsor information if the study is funded internally/departmentally or by an external sponsor or agency. **Note:** If you are compensating subjects with gift cards, who is providing the funds for the gift cards?

**Description of Study Procedures**

Describe all study procedures so that the subject knows what her/his participation will involve. You should include a description of the topics that the subject be asked about (especially if there are any sensitive topics), the length of time required to complete the activities, and whether the subject will be contacted again in the future. If deception is involved, you must provide a debriefing script following the research activity for review and allow subjects the opportunity to withdraw their data or opt out. If you do not plan to debrief subjects, the protocol will be reviewed by the convened committee. If sensitive questions are asked, you need to disclose this and provide counseling services as applicable.

**Confidentiality**

Describe how you plan to preserve the subject’s confidentiality. **Do not** interchange the terms “confidential” (i.e., maintained in a way that prevents inadvertent or inappropriate disclosure of participants’ identifiable information) and “anonymous” (i.e., identifiers are not collected or known). Information is either confidential or anonymous, not both. If you are audio/video recording, include how and when these recordings will be destroyed at the earliest opportunity.

**Financial Considerations or Extra Credit (Students)**

If you are planning to pay or compensate participants, explain fully and clearly what they will be paid, how they will be paid (i.e. gift card), and any intervals of payments. For example, “You will be paid with a $10.00 gift card after each focus group. You can receive up to $30.00 in gift cards for completion of the three focus group sessions. Also include if subjects will be paid and the amount they will be paid if they do not complete the entire study. Payment should not be coercive in amount or method of distribution. Please utilize the “Tax Compensation Template” on the IRB Forms page for distribution with any compensation provided.

**Voluntary Participation**

Explain that subjects do not have to participate in the research and there will be no negative consequences if they choose not to participate or withdraw their participation. Include that participants can end their participation at any time and can skip any questions they do not want to answer.

**Contact Persons for Questions**

Provide the subject with your contact information, your faculty advisor’s contact information (if applicable), and the phone number for the WVU Office of Human Research Compliance if they have any questions about their rights as a research subject.

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Dear Participant,

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project [insert purpose of the project here]. This project is being conducted by [Jane Doe, BA] in the [Insert Department Name] at WVU (if applicable) [under the supervision of Dr. John Smith], an [Insert position at WVU] in the [Insert Department Name], to fulfil requirements for a Master's Degree in Research.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to [describe activities or procedures the participant will need to complete]. Your participation in this project will take approximately [insert the time commitment to participate in the research activities]. (Include Inclusion Criteria as applicable.) You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. (If applicable) You will receive [list of the compensation provided for participation. Explain fully and clearly what they will be paid, how they will be paid (i.e. gift card), and any intervals of payments.]

Your involvement in this project will be kept as confidential as legally possible. All data will be reported in the aggregate. You will not be asked any questions that could lead back to your identity as a participant. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer and you may discontinue at any time. If enrolling students: Your class standing will not be affected if you decide either not to participate or to withdraw. West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board acknowledgement or approval of this project is on file. If you are collecting email addresses in an otherwise anonymous study, such as for a drawing or future research, include the following statement: Your email address will be requested so that we can enter your name in the drawing for the gift card. However, it will be stored separately from any data collected in the study.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or by e-mail at [email address] or (if applicable) [enter supervising faculty member’s contact information]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the WVU Office of Human Research Protection by phone at 304-293-7073 or by email at IRB@mail.wvu.edu.

I hope that you will participate in this research project, as it could help us better understand [include what the project is about here]. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Enter Name of Investigator]