ETHICS APPLICATION FORM
FACULTY OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Application Form for Human Research Ethics Clearance

The presumption is that researchers will be responsible to ensure that their research involving human participants is conducted according to the established principles and good practice in their field and in accordance, where appropriate, with legal requirements.

Please mark with X (Refer to Appendix 3 for the criteria)

Level of research risk	Low or minimal risk: Data are intended for public disclosure. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has no adverse effect. **Research ethics clearance is not needed.**	
	Moderate risk: Data are not generally available for public. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has a mildly adverse effect. **Please proceed to fill in the research ethics clearance form.**	
	High risk: Data are protected by law/regulation. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has a significantly adverse effect. **Please proceed to fill in the research ethics clearance form.**	

The form must be signed and sent by email to fnorashikin@unimas.my, together with all supporting documents in ONE (1) file.

SECTION A: RESEARCHER DETAILS

1. Title of research			
2. Grant number (if any)			
3. Proposed start date			
4. Proposed end date			
	Title and full name	Highest qualification	Faculty/Institute/Centre
5. Principal Investigator			
6. Co-researcher(s)			
7. Principal Investigator's email address			
8. Principal Investigator's telephone number			

SECTION B: BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

1. Aim and objectives of the study		Aim: Objectives:
2. Brief justification for value of the research		(Include this in Participant Information Sheet, Appendix 1 at the end of the form)
Method of study		
3. Location of research (E.g., Online/physical in which institution, town, or country (if outside of Malaysia))		
	Identifiable information (E.g, name, IC number)	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If Yes, please justify
4. Participants	a) Age range	
	Are participants people who may not be able to give informed consent? E.g., under 18 years old or adults "at risk" (i.e., with increased susceptibility to harm or exploitation due to compromised ability to decide or advocate for their interests, or their dependency)	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No
	b) Target number of participants	
	c) Selection criteria for participants (inclusion, exclusion)	
	d) Planned methods to recruit participants (E.g., advertisement, social media announcement,	

	email message, in-person approach)	
	e) Sampling method to recruit participants (E.g., purposive, stratified, random, snowball)	
	f) Will informed consent be sought from participants or their parents/guardians?	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If No, please explain why. If you have debriefing *after* the data collection instead of informed consent *before*, please explain this
	g) Explain how informed consent is obtained before they agree to participate in the study (E.g., verbal explanation, a written document)	
	h) Include Informed Consent document	Put in Appendix 2 at the end of the form If different participants are involved for different data collection methods, then prepare separate Informed Consent documents for each method

5. Data collection method	Please mark X for the methods that will be used	
	a) Interview (E.g., individual, focus group)	[ ]
	b) Questionnaire (State online or hard copy)	[ ]
	c) Observation (State overt or covert. Covert means that your presence is not known)	[ ]
	d) Collection of existing records (images, textual, recordings)	[ ]
	e) Photography of participant	[ ]
	f) Audio recording of participant	[ ]
	g) Video recording of participant	[ ]
	h) Participants performs task (E.g., verbal task, computer-based task, motor behaviour)	[ ]
	i) Others	

6. Instrument Include instrument for each method of data collection (E.g., Interview questions,	Put in Appendix 3 at the end of the form

observation checklist, instruction sheet for participants to perform task)	
7. Incentives in research State gifts or cash that will be offered to participants and the payment method (E.g., cash, bank transfer, voucher)	

SECTION C: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Will the research involve questions and/or discussions of controversial and/or sensitive issues? (E.g., race, politics, religion, sexual life)	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes, please justify why this is required
2. Will the research involve intentional deception of participants?	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes, please describe and explain debriefing procedures
3. How and where will the data be stored? (E.g., storage in password-protected files and locked filing cabinets)	
4. Will you use a unique participant number on research data instead of participant name?	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If No, please address confidentiality issues
5. Who will have access to the research data?	Please mark with X [ ] Researchers listed on this form [ ] Others If other researchers/organisations, please add details and describe transfer procedures to ensure that the data will not be identifiable
6. Please confirm that you will store the (non-identifiable) research data safely for at least three (3) years after final publication or public release and adhere to any additional research funder policies. Note: If you plan to retain identifiable data (including audio/video recordings and photos) beyond the end of the study and/or indefinitely, please state what data these are and the reasons for retention (E.g., contact details for future studies; photos used in publication). This must be clearly	Please mark with X [ ] Yes [ ] No If Yes, please give details of who will store the data, the storage format, location, and security. If No (E.g., data will be deleted in less than three years, please provide further details)

stated on participant information sheet and specific consent obtained.	

Please send the signed form and email as ONE (1) document to fnorashikin@unimas.my.

Principal Investigator (Name)	
Principal Investigator (Signature)	
Date	

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet on Study (See sample)

Appendix 2: Informed Consent document (See sample)

Appendix 3: Risk Criteria

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEET ON STUDY (SAMPLE)

CONSENT FORM

(Put title of research. It can be in a simplified version understandable to a lay person)
(Put name of researcher here)

If you agree to participate in the study, please tick the boxes.

	Yes
1. I have read the information sheet dated _____ for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.	
3. (If appropriate) *I agree to the [interview/focus group] being audio/video recorded.*	
4. (If appropriate) *I agree to be contacted about ethically approved studies for which I may be suitable. I understand that agreeing to be contacted does not oblige me to participate in any further studies.*	
5. I understand that all data I provide will be kept confidential and stored securely at _____ (state location). Only the researchers will have access to this.	
6. I understand that my data will remain anonymous at all times, including when the results of the study are disseminated in conferences, published articles, and/or _____ (state other platforms, if any).	
7. I have been provided with details of whom I should contact about the study.	
8. I agree to take part in this study.	

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant *Date* *Signature*

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (SAMPLE)

University logo
Principal Investigator's Name
Contact details

INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study (you can use a simplified version understandable to a lay person)
Invitation (see example)

Example: I would like to invite you to take part in our study. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is done and what you will need to do. Please take time to read this information. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask us.

What is the purpose of the study? (Provide a brief outline in simple language)

Why have I been invited? (Explain specifically. You may state how many participants you intend to involve and their characteristics. E.g., If you are above 18 years old and have X, I would like to participate in the study on Y)

Do I have to take part? (State participation is entirely voluntary and participants can withdraw if they later change their mind, without giving a reason. State whether their data collected up to their withdrawal will be retained or removed from the study)

What will taking part involve? (E.g., you will fill in an online questionnaire/be interviewed/attend a research session that will take about X minutes. Outline what they need to do in the research session)

Are there any possible disadvantages or risks from taking part? (Provide a fair and honest evaluation of the possible consequences of main research procedures and resulting risks, if any. E.g., some questionnaire or interview questions may cause distress, and outline what would happen if a participant becomes upset)

What are the possible benefits of taking part? (State direct benefit to participants, if any. If not, mention benefits to the society or research community)

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- Explain arrangements to ensure that information is kept secure. For example, where participant's identifiable data will be stored, what security arrangement is in place, and what will happen to the data once the study ends.
- Explain if codes will be used to identify participants, and if their personal details will be kept in separate password-protected files.

- If your study will involve video/audio-recording, outline what will happen to these recordings in the longer term; and, if transcribed, whether the recordings will be destroyed.

Will I be reimbursed for taking part? (Make clear whether they will be compensated for their time; state type of token if any)

What will happen to the results of this study? (Mention avenues for sharing your findings, including thesis. Reassure participants that they will not be identified from any report or publication placed in the public domain)

What if there is a problem? (If you wish to complain about any aspect of the way in which you have been approached or treated, or how your information is handled during the course of this study, you should contact <name of principal investigator><contact details> or you may contact the Jawatankuasa Etika Penyelidikan Manusia (Bukan Perubatan), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, hrec@unimas.my

Who is organising and funding the study? (State the funder and reference number)

Participation in future research (If you intend to approach participants to collect more data in the future, make it clear where their personal details will be kept. For e.g., Your contact details will be kept separately in password protected files in place X)

Thank you (E.g., Thank you for reading this information. Thank you for considering taking part in the study)

APPENDIX 3: RISK CRITERIA

Operational Definition of Risk Categories for Human Research (Non-Medical) Studies
(Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Etika Penyelidikan Manusia (Bukan Perubatan)
3/2026 Ke-20, 8 September 2026)

I. HIGH RISK IN HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE RESEARCH FORM

High risk: Data are protected by law/regulation. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has a significantly adverse effect.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF HIGH RISK USED BY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE

A. Data Privacy & Anonymity

1. **Identifiable or Non-Anonymous Data:** The project collects data or records where direct or indirect identifiers can be linked back to individual participants (e.g., interviews, observations, experiments, or interventions), even where participants are anonymised in publications or reports.
2. **Sensitive or Legally Protected Information:** The data collected involve sensitive personal information or information protected by law, regulation, or institutional policy, such as financial records, medical or health information, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, illegal behaviours, or other confidential personal information. This includes information obtained directly from participants as well as administrative, institutional, or controlled-access data.
3. **Potentially Significant Consequences of Data Breach:** Unauthorised access, disclosure, alteration, loss, or destruction of the data could result in significant adverse consequences for participants, researchers, institutions, or other stakeholders, including physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational harm.

B. Participant Population

1. **Vulnerable or Reduced-Autonomy Participants:** Participants whose ability to provide voluntary and informed consent may be limited by age, cognitive or decision-making capacity, institutionalisation, dependency, or other circumstances that may increase vulnerability to coercion or undue influence. Examples include children, prisoners, and adults with impaired decision-making capacity.
2. **Presence of Power Dynamics:** Participation may be affected by actual or perceived coercion, undue influence, or dependency arising from relationships between the researcher and participants, such as lecturer-student, employer-employee, supervisor-subordinate, or service-provider-recipient relationships. This includes situations where a gatekeeper controls access to participants, may influence their decision to participate, or may access information about their participation or responses. Participation or non-participation may have actual or perceived consequences for grades, academic progression, employment, appraisal, access to services, or other important outcomes, or where confidentiality and voluntariness cannot be adequately maintained.

3. **Participants at Increased Risk of Harm**: Participants whose involvement may expose them to a heightened risk of physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational harm because of their personal circumstances or the nature of the research.

C. Conduct of research

1. **Sensitive Topics and Contexts:** Research involving topics or contexts that may create heightened ethical, social, legal, political, or reputational risks for participants, researchers, institutions, or other stakeholders. This may include research involving race, religion, royalty, ethnicity, political beliefs or activities, communal relations, national security, or other locally sensitive issues, including the 3R issues (race, religion and royalty) in Malaysia. This may also include international research involving political sensitivities, local cultural practices, or circumstances in which research activities may have consequences for participants or researchers.
2. **Deception Withholding of Information:** The research involves deliberately withholding relevant information, providing incomplete or misleading information, or using deception that prevents participants from fully understanding the nature or purpose of their participation. It is considered high risk where it may cause significant harm, substantially compromise autonomy, or prevent meaningful informed consent, particularly where the risks cannot be adequately managed through established ethical procedures.
3. **Risks to researchers:** The research may expose researchers to significant physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational risks arising from the research setting, participants, subject matter, data, or research procedures. Examples include working in unsafe environments, exposure to violence or threats, research involving criminal or politically sensitive activities, fieldwork in areas affected by conflict or instability, or a substantial risk of harassment, intimidation, or retaliation.

II. MODERATE RISK IN HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE FORM

Moderate risk: Data are not generally available for public. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has a mildly adverse effect.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF MODERATE RISK USED BY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE

The key distinction between research with high risk and research with moderate risk should be that there may be identifiable data, some sensitivity, or some ethical concern, but the likelihood and/or severity of harm is limited and the risks can be managed through standard safeguards and procedures.

- **Qualitative and Quantitative Data:** Where qualitative data are collected such as through interviews, the study carries moderate risk because the researchers can identify the participants. Where quantitative data are collected such as through questionnaires, individual participants may also be identifiable directly or indirectly through a combination of demographic or other personal information.

- **Primary and Secondary Data:** Where primary data are collected, the data are not previously available to the researchers and are obtained directly from participants, normally with their informed consent; therefore, the study carries moderate risk. Where secondary data are used, the data have been previously collected for another purpose and may be publicly available or obtained from an existing dataset. Such studies may carry low risk where the data are non-sensitive, sufficiently anonymised, and their use does not pose a significant risk to individuals.
- **Social media data:** Where social media data are used, risk classification depends on whether the data are publicly accessible, the sensitivity of the content, and whether individuals can be identified. Publicly accessible posts on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram may be treated as publicly available secondary data, subject to platform terms of use and applicable laws and regulations. Posts in closed or private Facebook groups, or other restricted-access spaces, are not publicly available data. Researchers may obtain publicly accessible Facebook and Instagram data directly from the platform through authorised research mechanisms, such as Meta's Content Library and API. Such data are considered secondary data. Data obtained through unauthorised scraping or from commercial third-party sources should not automatically be treated as publicly available data, and their risk should be assessed based on the source, identifiability, sensitivity, and potential consequences of disclosure or misuse.

A. Data Privacy & Anonymity

1. **Identifiable or Non-Anonymous Data:** The project collects data or records containing direct or indirect identifiers that can be linked to individual participants, but the data do not involve sensitive or legally protected information and disclosure is unlikely to result in significant harm.
2. **Limited-Sensitivity Information:** The data collected may include personal or confidential information of a non-sensitive nature, where unauthorised disclosure is unlikely to result in significant physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational harm.
3. **Manageable Data Security Risks:** Unauthorised access, disclosure, alteration, loss, or destruction of the data may cause limited adverse consequences, but the risks can be adequately managed through standard safeguards, including access controls, secure storage, and appropriate anonymisation or pseudonymisation.

B. Participant Population

1. **Participants with Limited Vulnerability:** Participants may have circumstances that require additional consideration or safeguards for voluntary and informed consent, but are generally capable of providing consent and are not at substantial risk of coercion or undue influence.
2. **Limited Power Dynamics:** Participation may involve an actual or perceived power relationship between the researcher, participants, or gatekeepers, but appropriate measures can be taken to protect voluntariness, confidentiality, and freedom to decline or withdraw without adverse consequences.
3. **Limited Risk of Harm:** Participants may experience minor or temporary physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational risks arising from their participation, but significant harm is unlikely and the risks can be adequately managed through appropriate safeguards.

C. Conduct of Research

1. **Moderately Sensitive Topics and Contexts:** Research may involve topics or contexts requiring additional ethical consideration because of their social, cultural, institutional, political, or personal sensitivity, but significant adverse consequences for participants or researchers are unlikely and can be managed through appropriate safeguards.
2. **Limited Deception or Withholding of Information:** The research may involve limited deception or withholding of information that does not substantially compromise participants' autonomy or meaningful informed consent and does not pose a significant risk of harm. Such procedures must be justified and appropriately managed through established ethical safeguards.
3. **Limited Risks to Researchers:** The research may expose researchers to minor or manageable physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational risks arising from the research setting, participants, subject matter, data, or research procedures, but significant harm is unlikely and appropriate risk-management measures are available.

III. LOW OR MINIMAL RISK IN HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE FORM

Low or minimal risk: Data are intended for public disclosure. The loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of the data or system has no adverse effect. **Research ethics clearance application is not needed.**

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF LOW OR MINIMAL RISK USED BY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS (NON-MEDICAL) COMMITTEE

A. Data Privacy & Anonymity

1. **Publicly Available and Non-Sensitive Data**: The research uses information that is publicly accessible and does not contain sensitive personal information or information protected by law or regulation. Examples include newspaper articles, textbooks, magazines, publicly available reports, websites, and other open-access sources.The research does not involve the collection of new data from human participants.
2. **No Personal Identifiers**: The research does not collect direct or indirect personal identifiers, such as names, contact information, identification numbers, addresses, or other information that could reasonably be used to identify individual participants.
3. **Minimal Consequences of Data Breach:** Unauthorised access, disclosure, alteration, loss, or destruction of the data is unlikely to result in harm or significant adverse consequences to participants, researchers, institutions, or other stakeholders.

B. Participant Population

1. **Non-Vulnerable Demographics:** Participants are competent adults capable of providing voluntary and informed consent without coercion.
2. **Absence of Power Dynamics:** Participation is entirely voluntary and does not involve coercion, undue influence, or academic or workplace dependencies (e.g., mandatory student participation tied to grading).

C. Conduct of Research

1. **No Human Participant Involvement:** The research involves no recruitment, interaction, observation, or collection of data from human participants.
2. **Non-Intrusive Research Procedures:** The research involves only routine, non-intrusive procedures that are unlikely to cause physical, psychological, social, legal, financial, or reputational harm to participants. There is no intervention, deception, or procedure that could reasonably cause more than minimal discomfort.

D. System & Software Intervention

1. **Benign System Interactions:** The software involves standard user interface evaluations, routine web/mobile applications, usability testing, or basic digital literacy workflows that cause no psychological distress or fatigue.
2. **Non-Invasive Hardware:** Any hardware deployment involves off-the-shelf consumer devices (e.g., standard keyboards, monitors, or smartphones) without physiological monitoring (such as EEGs, invasive sensors, or high-intensity virtual reality that induces motion sickness).
3. **No Critical Automation:** Algorithmic or AI-driven components do not make automated high-stakes decisions impacting individuals' civil liberties, employment, education access, or resource allocation.

E. Community & Infrastructure Impact

1. **No Operational Disruption:** Deploying the computing solution does not interfere with critical local infrastructure, essential community services, or emergency systems.
2. **No Reputational or Legal Exposure:** Breaches or disclosures from the system cannot result in social stigmatization, loss of employment, civil liability, or criminal prosecution for participants or community stakeholders.
3. **Public Domain / Open Data Utilization:** Secondary data analysis strictly uses pre-existing, publicly available, or open-access datasets whose terms of use permit community-oriented research.