Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What if I have more than 2 co-investigators/supervisors?
   **Answer:** Please include the details of all co-investigators/co-supervisors. You can include an attachment if the space allocated is not enough.

2. What if the research has no funding or it is self-funded?
   **Answer:** Please state “no funding” or “self-funded”, whichever is applicable.

3. What should be included in the explanation on recruitment of participants?
   **Answer:** The explanation should include information about identifying, screening, contacting and selecting potential participants.

4. What do “inclusion criteria” and “exclusion criteria” mean?
   **Answer:** “Inclusion criteria” are specific characteristics that participants must have if they are to be included in the study (e.g., Males who participate in less than 150 minutes of physical activity a week, aged between 21 and 30 years) whereas the “exclusion criteria” are attributes that disqualify an individual from being included in the study (e.g., Participants who are unable to commit to a 3-month exercise intervention programme).

5. In the event that participants experience distress during the interview (e.g., emotional breakdown, disorientation, distraught, agitation, etc.), how will you address such situations?
   **Answer:** The wellbeing of the participant must be prioritized. It is advisable to terminate the interview session and participants should be given the necessary support to ensure that he/she is not facing any immediate risk. In addition, information regarding relevant support services or helpline(s) should be provided.

6. Do I need UMREC clearance if my study involves patients?
   **Answer:** If the research involves government health facilities, National Medical Research Register (NMRR) ethics clearance is sufficient. If the research involves UMMC patients, the clearance should be obtained from UMMC Medical Research Ethics Committee.

7. How will confidentiality and anonymity be preserved during data collection and analysis as well as when reporting results?
   **Answer:** Please explain in detail how you will protect the confidentiality or anonymity of participants. For example, if you know the identity of each participant, you may protect his/her confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym or unique code which will not be disclosed at any time. If photographs are used, the participant’s face must be masked.
8. Who will have access to the data?  
**Answer:** Only researchers and supervisors should have access to the data.

9. Who owns the data?  
**Answer:** The data belongs to the University of Malaya. Please write this in the application form. If you are collaborating with a third party (e.g., Ministry of Education) a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has to be signed for co-ownership of the data.

10. How long should the data be kept?  
**Answer:** The data should be kept for at least 5 years from the date of publication (thesis, journal article, etc.). After that period, the data should be destroyed. Paper-based data should be shredded. Data in digital form should be completely deleted. This has to be stated in the application form.

11. What is the appropriate method for data storage? How will the data be kept secure?  
**Answer:** Provide details on where data will be kept and how data will be kept secure. Hardcopy version of the data (e.g., questionnaires) should be stored in locked cabinets in the university. Digital version of the data should be stored in secure password protected computers. (e.g., All information and data from this study will be stored securely. The consent form with participants' names and signatures and all data will be stored on a secure, HIPAA-compliant online storage account. Only researchers who have been briefed about the security measures of the project will have access to the data.) This also should be mentioned in the application form.

12. What is the participant information sheet?  
**Answer:** The participant information sheet provides brief information of your research that is given to research participants prior to obtaining consent and data collection. A participant information sheet should be brief and written in simple lay language and understandable by the general public. Avoid using technical terms or jargons that might confuse the study participants.

13. What is a consent form?  
**Answer:** A consent form is a one-page sheet containing the title of the study together with the consent statements. Consent from participant is required before data collection is conducted. You are required to submit a template of your consent form (available from our website) with your ethics application.

14. If the participants for the study are aged 18 years and above, can I delete the part Parent/Guardian consent in the Consent Form?  
**Answer:** Yes.
15. I am doing an online survey. How do I obtain informed consent from the participants?  
   **Answer:** All studies, including online studies, must include informed consent. For online surveys, the page should include the participant information sheet and the consent form. At the bottom of the page, include a “checkbox” which states “By clicking the checkbox, I have given full consent and have agreed to participate in this study.”

16. Should the application forms be handwritten or computer typed?  
   **Answer:** The application forms should be computer typed. Handwritten forms will be rejected.

17. How long will it take UMREC to process my application for ethical clearance?  
   **Answer:** UMREC will take about 30 days to process your application after the submission deadline. However, the processing time might take up to 60 days depending on the research complexity. Please keep in mind that required amendments will require additional processing time. Applicants are advised to submit their ethics clearance application as **EARLY** as possible prior to their data collection.

18. Do I need UMREC approval for purely observational research?  
   **Answer:** UMREC clearance is not required if your research is non-invasive and non-interactive (e.g., collecting data from social media comments and reviews, observing people behaviour). However, ethics clearance approval is compulsory if the recorded observations identify individuals (names, photographs) which could place them at risk of harm, stigma or persecution.