

# Beaconhouse School System



## GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH

2019

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## Introduction

Beaconhouse School System (BSS) has always been a leading institution in educational innovation in Pakistan. BSS values its heritage while it continues to reinvent its educational approach to meet the needs of the future. With the rapid changes in global education, BSS endeavours to be ready to adapt, innovate and meet the expectations. It promotes a culture of system wide learning, evidence based decision-making, and research at all levels of the system. In order to provide a quality education of an international standard and to contribute towards the educational development in Pakistan, BSS recognizes the need to actively encourage research both internal and external to the system.

The BSS guidelines for conducting research have been developed to articulate the official research process within the principles of integrity and ethics. The importance of integrity and rigour are at the forefront of BSS philosophy and form the foundation for all the research conducted within the system as well as in partnership with BSS.

The practice of research at BSS requires adherence to certain processes and principles that may vary in detail according to the type of research. This document provides general guidelines which all the researchers, regardless of the nature of their affiliation with BSS, need to comply with. The intended audience for these guidelines is anyone undertaking educational research with or within BSS. This includes independent researchers, external organizations and those based within BSS.

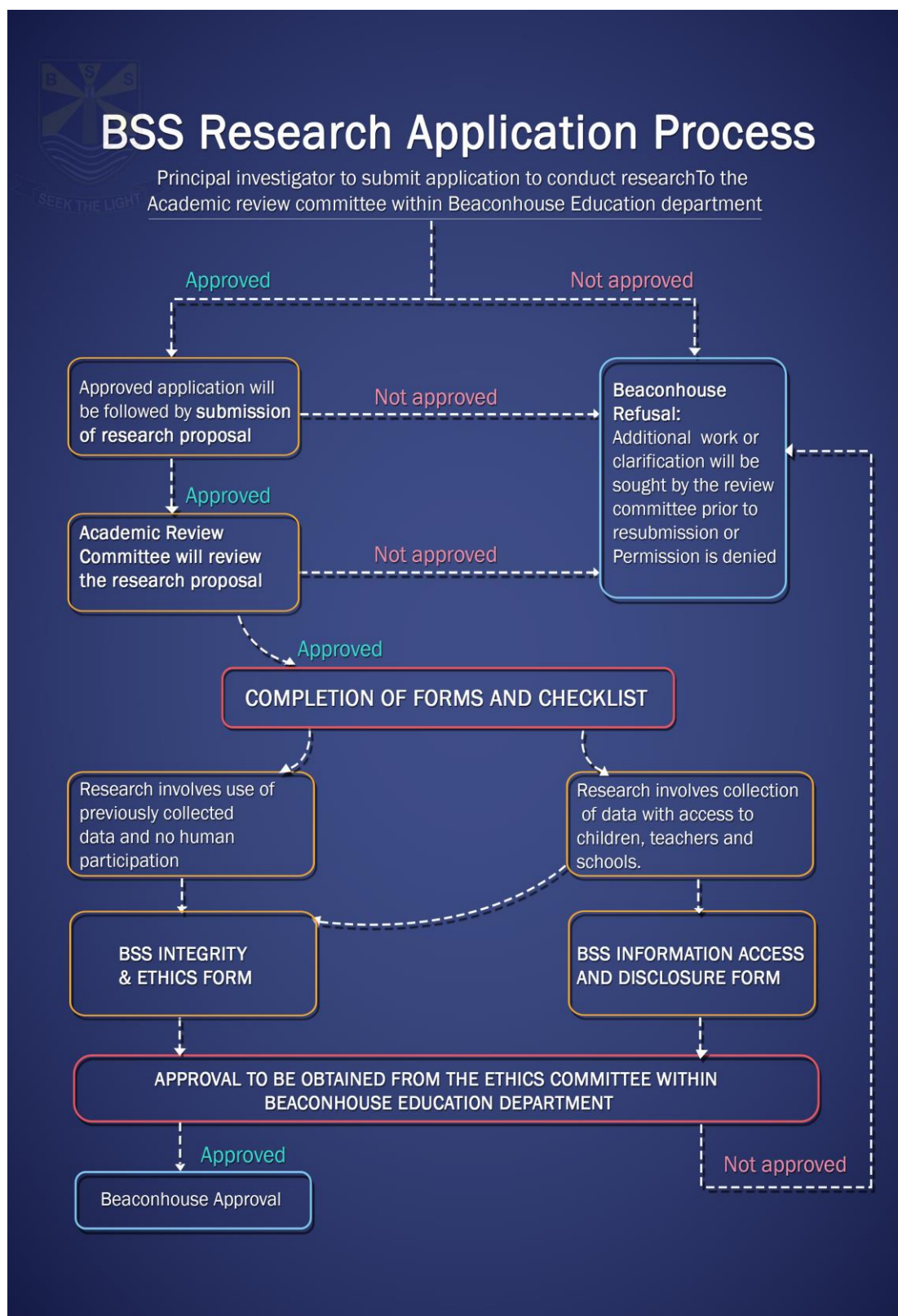
***Note:** the terms 'principal investigator' and 'researcher' are used interchangeably throughout the document. Both the terms mean the same and refer to the main person who will be conducting the research*

The guidelines have been developed with reference of and adaptation from:

1. Intellectual Property Organization Of Pakistan Act, 2012
2. University of Oxford: Research Guidelines, Research Policies & codes of practice
3. University of Cambridge: Good Research Practice Guidelines
4. Harvard University: Committee on the use of human subjects-revised rules
5. British Educational Research Association (BERA): Ethical Guidelines 2018
6. Social Research Association (SRA): Ethics Guidelines 2003 and Respect Code
7. Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC): Framework for Research Ethics
8. British Sociological Association (BSA): Statement of Ethical Practice 2017
9. Singapore statement on research integrity developed at the 2nd world conference on research integrity.

## BSS Research Application Process

Principal investigator(s)/researcher(s) will follow the BSS research process to gain approval to start the research. Process is outlined below (mentioned checklists and forms are attached as appendices):



# Criteria for the Research Proposal

## I. Overview and research question(s):

- What is the area under investigation? Who is the research audience? What is the research question(s)?
- What hypothesis does this study seek to test (what tentative answers will be tested)?
- Describe the importance of the question, context, etc.
- Describe the selected case(s)/sample(s) under study. What are the reasons for choosing them? If there is more than one case or sample type, will there be a comparative focus of the research?
- How will this research add to the field of education and particularly Beaconhouse School System? What are the potential implications of the research?

## II. Background literature and theoretical framework

- What is the main literature in which you will embed your chosen topic and research question(s)? Demonstrate the knowledge of selected area by discussing the depth and breadth of existing work in the selected area.
- What are the key debates and how will your research contribute to these?
- What concepts and ideas underpin the research?
- Provide rationale to support the specified hypothesis as the next logical step in answering your research question

## III. Research design

- What are the main variables and what explanatory argument is the research pursuing?
- What will not be explained through the research?

## IV. Research methods

- What is the main form of evidence/data. What methods will be used to gain the evidence to address the question(s)?
- What methods of analysis will be used?
- Explain why are the chosen methods the most suitable?
- How feasible is the chosen methodology, especially given the availability and accessibility of any data needed for the research?

## V. Research limitations

### 1. Internal or Formal limitations

- Issues of reliability and validity due to the material and procedures used
- The ways in which critical terms are defined
- The applicability, or generalizability of any results

### 2. External limitations

- Constraints on time, scope, and budget. Limitations on travel
- Changes in current situations, (e.g. evolving political situation)

## VI. Ethics

- Are there any ethical issues attached to the planned research?
- If so how will these be dealt with? This is important particularly if the research involves human participation, especially children's participation

## **Composition of the Research Review Committees**

### **Academic Review Committee**

Academic review committee will have three to four members. At least two of these members will be from the BSS Education Department i.e. General Manager research & development and one other member of Education department nominated by Chief Education Advisor/Officer. Third member will be from the concerned department specific to the area under study. This will ensure that the members are sufficiently qualified with varying expertise to review the research proposal from all aspects of education research.

In addition to possessing the professional competence necessary to review the proposal, the committee will be able to ascertain the acceptability of the application in terms of BSS policies and procedures and the potential contribution towards the field of education.

The committee may, at its discretion, invite individuals with expertise and competence in special areas to assist in the review process.

The committee will not give approval for research that does not have direct educational implications and/or other specific benefits to students and teachers. BSS reserves the right to consider proposals in the light of both the needs of educational settings and BSS priorities.

### **Ethics Review Committee**

Ethics committee will be comprised of three members; one each from the BSS Education Department, department specific to the research and BSS Human Resource (HR) department. The committee member from HR department will either be Director HR himself or a person appointed by him.

## **Beaconhouse Approval to Conduct Research**

Researchers should allow four weeks for their research application to be considered. If a delay occurs it would be appropriate for researchers to contact the BSS Education Department.

Once BSS approval has been granted for research to proceed, researchers must advise BSS of any subsequent changes in circumstances.

Approval to conduct research in BSS does not imply that the research has the support or endorsement of any department, school or region in the system. A letter of approval from the Chief Education Advisor/Officer gives permission for the researcher to approach the principal of an educational setting, but it does not guarantee that the principal will agree to participate.

Educational settings are under no obligation to participate in research however, many of them appreciate the benefits that can flow from such research and are willing to participate.

If the data obtained from the primary research is to be put to any other use than that described in the approved research application a new application will need to be made to BSS research review committees.

When permission to conduct research is not approved, or permission is dependent on amendments being made to the research proposal, the researcher can seek additional feedback from BSS. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide all additional information.

*Projects that run for more than three years must be re-submitted for approval by 31 January of each subsequent year of the project.* A progress report should also be submitted at this time. This process is to ensure that re-approval has been sought from relevant ethics committees, that the proposal still meets BSS guidelines, and to monitor changes in circumstances that may have occurred in that time.

Please note, any research that is proposed in order to meet the requirements of a degree completion (MSc., MPhil, PhD), requires an accompanying letter from the academic supervisor/institution/university along with the research proposal. The letter should be on the University/Institution's letterhead with the official seal.

## **BSS Ethical Guidelines**

All individuals involved in research at BSS are expected to uphold highest standards of ethics, integrity and professionalism. This applies to their own actions in research and their response to actions of others. BSS ethics guidelines apply for the whole range of research activities, from designing studies and experiments to data collecting, generating, recording, analyzing and sharing the data and results. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator/researcher to check for validity, reliability, accuracy and consistency. The researcher should be able to explain and justify the results and how they were reached.

Researcher should be careful that desire for knowledge does not lead to disrespect of the subjects of research whether it's the overall system, school, teachers or students. The overriding aim of conducting research at BSS is to do no harm.

### **Professional integrity**

The researcher and the researching teams must uphold following principles at all times:

- Honesty in all aspects of research
- Accountability in the conduct of research
- Professional courtesy and fairness while working with others



Researchers are responsible for the trustworthiness of their research and should themselves recognize the boundaries of their professional competence. They need to distinguish professional comments from opinions based on personal views. It is their responsibility to report to BSS Ethics Review Committee any suspected misconduct, including plagiarism, falsification and fabrication. Researchers must refrain from using misleading analytical methods and concealing conflicting data. Researchers will be responsible for safeguarding the interests of those involved in research. They need to share their results and findings accurately and truthfully.

The list of authors should be made known; authorship comprises of a list of everyone who has made a substantive and identifiable contribution to the reported research. A research cannot be used for individual outputs if more than one researcher carried it out; consent of all the involved researchers would be required in order to do so.

Researchers need to recognize their professional competence and their limitations. They should not take part in a research they are not qualified to undertake.

## **External Funding**

Researcher will be required to share all the details of the funding for their research. In case the research is being funded by external agency/donor/organization the researcher needs to inform BSS. BSS has the right to deny research approval to information if the source of funding does not meet the approval of the system.

## **Selection of educational setting & obtaining permission**

Research proposals should nominate the educational setting(s)/school(s) in which they wish to conduct research. Due to the increasing number of requests to conduct research in educational settings, approval will be given to proposals that request the involvement of a smaller number of targeted educational settings unless exceptional circumstances exist. It is recommended that drawing a random sample of educational settings will provide sufficient data.

If educational settings, other than those initially nominated, need to be approached to provide sufficient data, then permission must be sought from BSS Research review committees to include additional locations, prior to contacting the additional educational settings. Permission will only be granted after consent has been obtained from the concerned school.

The researcher shall prepare a letter that seeks permission from principals to conduct research in their educational setting. This letter should explain the purpose of the research as well as the level of involvement. A copy of this letter should be included with the application. Once approval to conduct research is given, the letter together with copies of consent forms, plain language statements, and instruments should be forwarded to the nominated principals. The checklist of all the required forms is available in appendix A.



## Minimising disruption to educational settings

The principal and staff of an educational setting are best placed to judge the likely degree of disruption to the educational program. The researcher must consider ways of ensuring that data collection procedures (for example, the administration of tests or questionnaires) cause minimal disruption to school/college activities. It is expected that researchers will discuss these matters with principals and teachers and ensure that time frames are appropriate given the context.

## Responsibilities to the participants

### Informed consent

The research needs to be based on the freely given consent of those under study; BSS requires participants' consent. It is the responsibility of the researcher to explain as fully as possible to the participants what the research is about, why it is being undertaken and how it will be disseminated. Participants have full right to refuse participation, and it is the researcher's responsibility to make them aware of this right.

In case of participants who do not have the capacity to consent, e.g. children and young adults below the age of 18, the consent will be obtained from parents or guardians. BSS will not accept a proposal or allow research to go on if the signed consent form from the parents is not available. Failure to return a form, which the parent may not have received, does not prove 'consent' in a legal sense; again in such a situation permission to start or continue the research will not be granted.

To ensure that consent is informed, researchers should prepare an information sheet, in simple language, for distribution to parents/guardians and adult students and this should also be submitted to BSS with the research application (appendix A).

The overall principles that should be adhered to when providing information should be that:

- parents/guardians/students should be given enough information to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the proposed research
- respondents are made aware of the voluntary nature of participation in the study
- respondents are made aware that they will retain the right to withdraw from participation in the study
- active consent is required from parents, guardians and participants before research can be undertaken
- the process of informing and gaining consent from all school personnel must be similar to that described for students.

## **Confidentiality of information**

The privacy and anonymity of the participants should be respected. Personal information concerning participants needs to be kept confidential but may be shared with the members of the 'research team', as and if necessary. Therefore researcher should maintain confidentiality of information and provide assurances of this to educational settings and respondents. Individual respondents must remain anonymous, as should their responses. Individual respondents should be given an identifier, and names kept separately and securely (for further clarity refer to the BSS data protection policy).

Guarantees of confidentiality once given must be honoured and care must be taken to prevent data being published or shared which could lead to actual or potential identification of research participants. Withholding names may not be sufficient as number of separate pieces of information may permit identification; the researcher needs to be cautious of that.

It is usual practice that student records held by the educational setting are not available for research purposes. A researcher would need to have exceptional reasons for seeking information from student records and must take into account the legality of the request being made. Where limited access to such records is granted by BSS, principals must also grant permission, and parental/student consent is always required.

## **Rights to Withdraw**

All the participants have the right to withdraw from the research for any reason at any time. It is the responsibility of the researcher(s) to inform the participants of this right in the beginning. Decisions to persuade them to continue their participation should be taken with care and payment, coercion or duress of any form should not be used.

## **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest can occur when the research at BSS competes with the researcher's personal interests or commitment and affiliation with another organization. This conflict of interest may jeopardise the BSS public standing and reputation as well as the reputation of the researcher. If such a situation arises BSS may take legal and/or financial actions against the researcher(s). It is the responsibility of the researcher(s) to declare a possible perception of a conflict. Researcher also needs to be aware of conflict of interest requirements set by external organizations with which he/she is affiliated to. For further clarity, researchers are advised to refer to HR conflict of interest policy for BSS employees.

## Intellectual Property Rights

BSS claims ownership of all intellectual property devised, made or created by BSS employees in course of their employment as well as by persons engaged in study or research at BSS.

Intellectual property, as defined by Intellectual Property Organization Of Pakistan Act, 2012, includes:

*a trademark, patent, industrial design, layout-design (topographies) of integrated circuits, copyright and related rights and all other ancillary rights*

BSS also claims ownership of:

- all the work generated by computer hardware or software owned by BSS
- all the work created with the aid of BSS facilities (e.g. videos, photographs, multimedia, school premises etc.)

## Data Sharing & Data Protection

Research data obtained especially from schools and children contain personal data and is sensitive or confidential information. Tension exists between data sharing and data protection because of this; if data is not to be shared then it cannot contribute towards the field of education. BSS is aware of this confusion and urges the researchers to distinguish clearly between personal data collected in research and research data in general. Once the data has been anonymised (as mentioned in previous sections) it is no longer ‘personal’ and cannot reveal the identity.

It is researchers’ responsibility to obtain informed consent for data sharing along with consent for participation

It is integral on part of the researcher to store data securely and restrict access to it. Researchers need to share with BSS ethics review committee and the participants how the data and the confidential information be kept, stored and used safely.

Consent would be required from the parents/guardians of children if they are to be part of any visual evidence, e.g. videotaping. Researchers need to be aware that visual material could be misused by others and should take steps to prevent this as far as possible.

Researchers need to be aware that participants’ understandings of their level of privacy in a particular online space may be inaccurate. Therefore, researchers using data gathered online need to inform the participants (in case of children, their parents/guardians) which online data will be used in research and how this data will be used.

## Responsibilities for Dissemination

Researchers need to communicate their research findings and its practical significance in a clear, straightforward manner. The language should be appropriate for the intended audience. The research conducted at BSS requires BSS approval before it can be made public.

Researches need to be aware of potential constraints upon publishing findings which BSS may consider to be of sensitive nature.

Researchers need to inform BSS the minute they become aware of the controversial nature of findings. BSS will collaboratively work with the researchers to decide on a fair publication strategy.

## **Feedback and involvement**

It is a requirement of BSS that a report be provided to the BSS education department on the final outcomes of research conducted. There is also an expectation that feedback will be provided to those educational settings participating in the research through a formal report, and through sharing insights and findings with students, parents/guardians and teachers involved. In addition, gaining feedback, both positive and negative, from those locations involved in the research is a valuable basis for planning future research.

### **For further information, please contact:**

**General Manager Research & Development  
Education Department  
Beaconhouse School System  
10-11 Gurumangat Road, Gulberg III, Lahore**

**Telephone: +924211232266 Ext 349  
Email: [researchinfo@bh.edu.pk](mailto:researchinfo@bh.edu.pk)**

## Appendix A- Researchers' Checklist

Please make sure following are attached along with your application to conduct research at Beaconhouse School System (BSS).

1. An application stating your desire to conduct a study or research at BSS ☐
2. Research Proposal ☐
3. BSS Integrity & Ethics Form ☐
4. BSS Information Access & Disclosure Form (if required) ☐

If you have completed BSS Information Access & Disclosure form then please attach the sample of following with your application as well. These will be shared with the participants after you have received BSS approval to start your research. Once the approval has been given, researcher(s) will be required to sign a 'Non-disclosure agreement' with BSS

- Participants Invitation Letter to take part in your research ☐
- Participants' consent form ☐
- Data sharing consent form ☐
- List of interview questions (if conducting interviews) ☐
- Sample survey questions (if required) ☐

## Appendix B- BSS Integrity & Ethics Form

Please fill out the following form and submit with your research proposal.

<b>Name</b>		
<b>Address for Correspondence</b>		
<b>Email</b>		
<b>Telephone</b>		
<b>Affiliation with Beaconhouse:</b>  Internal Employee <input type="checkbox"/>  External Researcher <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Research Project Start &amp; End Date:</b>		
<b>Research Title:</b>		
<b>Brief Description:</b>		
<b>Methods (Please tick all that apply)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Literature review  <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Systematic review  <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Theoretical papers  <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Documentary analysis  <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secondary analysis		

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>6. Qualitative</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>7. Survey</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>"I confirm that I am using data that was collected before my proposed research was formulated. It is fully anonymised and is publicly available."</b></p> <p><i>(Checking this box means you will not need to complete a BSS Information Access &amp; Disclosure form)</i></p>
<p><b>If you have ticked any or all of the boxes 5,6 and 7, you need to fill the <u>BSS information Access &amp; Disclosure form</u>.</b></p>	
<p><i><b>"The submitted research proposal is my own work and I have the intellectual property rights to it. I have read the Beaconhouse School System Guidelines for Conducting and Research and I am aware of my role and responsibilities as a researcher."</b></i></p>	
<p><b>Signatures:_____ Date:_____</b></p>	



## Appendix C- BSS Information Access & Disclosure Form

**Please complete the form by answering all the questions.** *This form should be submitted along with your research proposal and BSS Integrity & Ethics Form*

Section A- Researcher Details	
Principal Investigator/Researcher	
Department/School <i>(If BSS employee)</i>	
Organization <i>(if not a BSS employee)</i>	
Address for Correspondence	
Name of others taking part in the research	
Section B-Project Description	
Title of research project:	
Brief Description:	
List of educational settings where the research will be conducted:	
Anticipated duration of research project overall:	
Anticipated start & end date:	
External organization that will be involved in research and/or funding of research:	

## **Section C-Participants' Consent**

Briefly provide description of participants and how will you obtain informed consent (max. 200 words). Please include:

- criteria for selection of participants
- method of selection
- processes for obtaining consent to participate

Please attach as a separate document:

- the information letter for the participants
- template for written consent form
- list of potential interview questions or sample questionnaire

Section D- Ethical Concerns	
<p>What are the ethical issues attached with your research? <i>(please refer to BSS ethical guidelines)</i></p> <p>What steps have you taken or plan to take in order to address them?</p>	
<p><b>Will your research involve discussion of sensitive or controversial issues?</b>  <i>(Political, religious, etc.)</i></p> <p><b>If yes, how do you plan to handle these issues?</b></p>	
<p><b>How will you ensure that personal data is collected, recorded and stored safely and securely?</b></p>	
Section E- Methods and Procedures	
	<b>Please Mark 'X'</b>
1. Analysis of existing records	
2. Sampling	
3. Participants' Observations	
4. Observation of some educational practices	

5. Questionnaires	
6. Using social media	
7. Participants to perform paper and pencil tasks	
8. Audio & video recordings	
9. Focus groups	
10. Photography of participants	
11. Others (please specify) :	
<b>Section F- Signatures</b>	
<p>“I understand my responsibilities as principal researcher. I declare that the answers given above accurately describe the proposed research. I will submit new forms if the design of the research changes. I will inform BSS if I cease to be the principal researcher on this project and will supply the details of the new principal researcher”</p> <p>Signature:_____</p> <p>Name:_____</p> <p>Date:_____</p>	

## Appendix D- Participants' Consent Form (Sample)

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

BSS Approval Ref:

**Research project title:**

**Purpose of Research:**

*Please initial  
each box with Y  
for yes and N for  
No*

- |    |  |                          |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1  | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by _____ <i>(researcher's name along with any other person or organization)</i> where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Beaconhouse School System's Research Review Committees   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | I understand how this research will be written up and published.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | I consent to being audio recorded  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | I understand how audio recordings / videos / photos will be used in research outputs   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication against my name  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | I agree to take part in the study  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Optional:** I agree for my personal data to be kept in a secure database  
for the purpose of contacting me about future studies.

☐

---

Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature

---

Name of person taking consent

---

Date

---

Signature

## **Appendix E- Participant Information Sheet (Sample)**

**Research Project Title:**  
**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**  
BSS Approval Ref: [Insert]

- 1. *What is the purpose of this research?***
- 2. *Why have you been invited to take part?***
- 3. *Do you have to take part?***
- 4. *What will happen to me if you take part in the research?***
- 5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?***
- 6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?***
- 7. *What happens to the collected data?***
- 8. *Will the research be published?***
- 9. *Who is organising and funding the research?***
- 10. *Who has reviewed this research?***



**11. How will your data be protected?**

**12. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?**

**Note for researcher:** please add the following lines:

(If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to the relevant researcher\_\_\_\_\_ (name and contact no.) or \_\_\_\_\_ (Provide details of your line manager) who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it.

If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the BSS Ethics Review Committee at the \_\_\_\_\_ (provide contact details)

**13. Further Information and Contact Details**

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

***Provide researcher(s) complete contact details***

