**Debriefing Template**

You may need to debrief participants after they have completed your study ***to inform them about any deceptive study procedures or element(s)***. Whether or not you choose to debrief participants depends on the nature of your research, whether your data collection was anonymous, and if debriefing would cause more harm than good. If your data collection was anonymous and it will not be possible for you to remove data from individual participants should they choose to withdraw, you should evaluate whether debriefing is necessary and potentially choose not to do so.

Information in the debriefing document must be organized to facilitate comprehension. **Debriefing should be written in plain language, generally at an 8th-grade reading level.** The reading level can be higher if the target population tends to have a higher literacy rate than the general population.

We recommend the use of this template to create the debriefing document(s) for your study. Please note the following:

1. Text in [brackets] represents information about your study that you must add. Your study information should be written in plain language.
2. A backslash indicates that you must make a selection depending on your study procedures (e.g., “will/will not” or “I/we”).
3. Additional instructions or sample text are provided in boxes.
4. Before you submit your consent document to the IRB, delete this cover page, brackets, and boxes. The finished document should reflect what you will give to the subject.
5. Please follow the **instructions in blue** below, revising or providing the information in **red**. You will need to remove the instructions as you go, including these instructions. The font color of your completed document should be **black**.
6. If your study will involve multiple types of participants requiring different debriefing forms, use a file name for each debriefing document that clearly identifies the intended audience (e.g., teacher debriefing, student debriefing, etc.).

For questions about debriefing, please contact the IRB at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

For more information on plain language, go to <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>.

**Debriefing Statement**

**Title of the Project:** [Title]

**Principal Investigator:** [Name, credentials, institutional affiliation]

[**Co-investigator(s):** Name(s), credentials, institutional affiliation]

**Thank you for being part of a research study.**

You recently participated in a research study. You were selected as a participant because you [Provide your eligibility criteria.]. Participation in this research project was voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask any questions you may have.

**What was the study about and why was it being done?**

The purpose of the study was [study purpose.].

In two to three sentences and in plain language, please list the purpose of your study. Do not include details about your procedures.

**Why am I receiving a debriefing statement?**

The purpose of this debriefing statement is to inform you that the true nature of the study or an aspect of the study was not previously disclosed to you.

**[Option 1: False or misleading information]** You were originally told [false or misleading information] [Restate the false or misleading information provided to participants.]. In reality, [accurate information] [Provide accurate information.].

**[Option 2: Incomplete disclosure]** You were originally told [incomplete information] [Restate the incomplete information provided to participants.]. You were not told [undisclosed information] [Provide the undisclosed information.].

Choose the above option that best describes the type of deception used in your study, provide the requested information, and delete the remaining option. If both options were used, retain and complete both.

**Why was deception necessary?**

Deception was necessary because [reason for deception] [Explain the reason(s) behind your use of false or misleading information/incomplete disclosure.].

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. [Include the following sentence if the data will NOT be anonymous.] [Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.] Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher[s] will have access to the records. [Include the following sentence if the data will NOT be anonymous and the possibility of sharing the data exists. If neither is the case, you may delete it.] Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

[Include the following in this section:

* A statement describing procedures taken to protect the privacy of the participant(s) and the confidentiality of their data: [e.g., Participant responses will be anonymous./ Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of [pseudonyms/codes]./ Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.].
* Describe how and where data will be stored, how the data will be disposed of, and any anticipated use of the data in the future (e.g., studies, presentations, etc.). [e.g., Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.] [**Note**: Data should be retained for three years upon completion of the study.]
* Describe how recordings, if used, will be maintained, who will have access to the recordings, if they will be used for educational purposes, and when they will be erased. [e.g., [Interviews/focus groups] will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher[s] will have access to these recordings.]
* Discuss any limits to confidentiality. [e.g., Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.]

**Anonymous** means you, the researcher, will not be able to link your data (e.g., survey responses, grades, etc.) to the specific participants who provided or are associated with the data. **Confidential** means you will be able to link individual participants to the information they provide or are associated with, but you will not disclose participant identities or how named or identifiable individuals responded.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

**[Option 1: Anonymous survey research that has not been submitted]** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please [exit the survey and close your internet browser.]—OR—[inform the researcher[s] that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials.] Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**[Option 2: Anonymous survey research that has already been submitted]** Because the surveys were anonymous, it is not possible to link your survey to you and remove your survey from the study. Your responses will be recorded and included in the study.

**[Option 3: All Other Research]** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher[s] at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you [, apart from focus group data,] will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. [Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.] [**Note:** Revise or remove the focus group information as needed.]

Choose the above option that best describes the type of data collection used and your ability to withdraw data from your study. Delete the remaining options.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher[s] conducting this study [is/are] [your name and the name(s) of any co-researcher(s).]. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact [him/her/them] at [phone number and/or email.]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, [name], at [email].

If the researcher is a faculty member, the sponsor name/email information may be removed.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

Do not remove the IRB’s contact information or the disclaimer from this document.