**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 whether debriefing would cause more harm than good. Using our template can help avoid extra paperwork and delays in approving the study.

The contents of the debriefing template have been organized to facilitate understanding. **Debriefing should be written in plain language, excluding technical terms, and generally at an 8th-grade reading level.** The reading level can be higher if the planned participant population tends to have a higher literacy rate than the general population. For more information on plain language, go to <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>.

Please note the following:

1. Text in [brackets] represents information about your study that you must add.
2. A forward slash (/) indicates that you must select an option specific to your study (e.g., “will/will not” or “I/we”) and remove the remaining option(s).
3. Additional instructions or sample text are provided in boxes.
4. Before you submit your debriefing document to the IRB, delete this cover page, brackets, and boxes. You’ll also need to remove any extra spaces created when the boxes were removed.
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. The finished document should reflect what you will give to prospective participants.
7. 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).

**Debriefing Statement**

Provide your study title, **ensuring it matches the title you listed on your IRB application**. Regarding co-investigators, list any individuals assisting you with your research. If you are a student, do not list your faculty sponsor as a co-investigator. Only list a faculty member if they will be part of a study team.

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

**Principal Investigator:** [Your Name, [List your role/affiliation with LU.] [Student/Graduate Student/Doctoral Candidate/Faculty Member/etc.], [Provide the name of your academic school or department (e.g., School of Education, Psychology Department, etc.).] [\_\_\_], Liberty University

[**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?**

In one to two sentences and plain language, please list the purpose of your study. Do not include details about your procedures as they will be discussed below.

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

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

Choose the below 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.

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.].

**Why was deception necessary?**

Complete the below sentence by explaining why it was necessary to use deception.

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?**

**Please read the below definitions before completing this section:**

**\*Anonymous** means **you, the researcher,** cannot link your data (e.g., survey responses, grades, etc.) to the specific participants who provided or are associated with the data.

\***Confidential** means **you can** 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.

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 in this section:]

* [Based on your study procedures and the above definitions, retain the applicable statement, and remove the inapplicable statement. If your study will involve both anonymous (e.g., an anonymous online survey) and confidential data (e.g., an interview and focus group), retain both statements and specify which forms of data will apply to each (e.g., Participant responses *to the online survey* will be anonymous.).] Participant responses [will be anonymous./will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms/numbers.]
* [Include the following sentence if the data is NOT anonymous and the possibility of using the data for future research or sharing the data with another/other researcher(s) exists. If neither is the case, you may delete it.] [Data collected from you may be [used in future research studies] [and/or] [shared with other researchers]. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.]
* [Describe how and where data will be stored, who will have access to it, and if and how the data will be disposed of. If you will have both electronic and hardcopy data, include information associated with both.] Data will be stored [on a password-locked computer/in a locked [drawer/file cabinet]/etc.]. The [researcher/the researcher and members of [his/her] doctoral committee/the study team/etc.] will have access to the data. [After [three/five/seven] years, [all electronic records will be deleted] [and/or] [all hardcopy records will be shredded.]/Data will be retained indefinitely.] [**Note**: Data should be retained for at least three years after the completion of your study.]
* [Include the following if you will record participants. Describe where and for how long recordings will be stored, who will have access to them, and when they will be erased.] Recordings will be stored [on a password-locked computer/etc.]. The [researcher/the researcher and members of [his/her] doctoral committee/the study team/etc.] will have access to the recordings. [After [three/five/seven] years/once participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the recording transcripts], [the recordings will be [deleted/erased.]/Recordings will be retained indefinitely.]

**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 ethically 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.