**Information on CUREC Research Study Protocol Template – please read before starting**

The template is available for use by all investigators who are carrying out clinical research studies sponsored by the University of Oxford, and eligible for ethical review by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).

If your study involves the use of human tissue (including, but not limited to, blood, urine, saliva, faeces), please refer to the CUREC Best Practice Guidance for the use of human tissue from healthy volunteers – BPG15 (<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg>) to confirm whether or not CUREC review will be sufficient for your proposed sample use.

The purpose of this document is to guide researchers to consider all the aspects of the study. The protocol should be a document that describes the objectives, design, methodology, statistical considerations and organisation of a research study

Note that some of the sections of this template may not apply to your study and may be deleted.

All advisory text is highlighted in yellow. These should all be deleted before finalising the document.

If not relevant, sections may be deleted entirely. There may also be instances where rearrangement of the subsections within section 7 is appropriate, in order to match with the order of study processes. Advisory text for deletion/rearrangement is highlighted in blue.

Repetition of information throughout the protocol is not necessary; it may be useful to cross-reference other sections of the protocol to avoid repetition.

Should you require any assistance, please contact CTRG.

https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/ctrg

**Study Title:**  insert full title including brief reference to the design, disease or condition being studied, and primary objective

**Internal Reference Number / Short title:** This should be assigned by the investigator/department (may be deleted if not required)

**MS IDREC Ref:** Insert

**Date and Version No:** Insert

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Principal Investigator:** | Insert name and contact details, including institutional affiliation |
| **Investigators:** | Insert names of key collaborators, including institutional affiliations |
| **Sponsor:** | University of Oxford |
| **Funder:** | Insert details of organisation providing funding |
| **Principal Investigator Signature:** | The approved protocol should be signed by author(s) and/or person(s) authorised to sign the protocol |

Please declare any potential conflicts of interest.

**Confidentiality Statement**

This document contains confidential information that must not be disclosed to anyone other than the authorised individuals from the University of Oxford, the Investigator Team and members of the Medical Sciences Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (MS IDREC), unless authorised to do so.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

To update table of contents (TOC), hover cursor over the table and ‘right click’. Choose ‘update field’, then ‘update entire table’.

[1. SYNOPSIS 6](#_Toc464217302)

[2. ABBREVIATIONS 6](#_Toc464217303)

[3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE 7](#_Toc464217304)

[4. OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME MEASURES 7](#_Toc464217305)

[5. STUDY DESIGN 8](#_Toc464217306)

[6. PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT 8](#_Toc464217307)

[6.1. Study Participants 8](#_Toc464217308)

[6.2. Inclusion Criteria 9](#_Toc464217309)

[6.3. Exclusion Criteria 9](#_Toc464217310)

[7. STUDY PROCEDURES 9](#_Toc464217311)

[7.1. Recruitment 9](#_Toc464217312)

[7.2. Screening and Eligibility Assessment 9](#_Toc464217313)

[7.3. Informed Consent 10](#_Toc464217314)

[7.4. Randomisation 10](#_Toc464217315)

[7.5. Baseline Assessments 10](#_Toc464217316)

[7.6. Subsequent Visits 10](#_Toc464217317)

[7.7. Sample Handling 11](#_Toc464217318)

[7.8. Discontinuation/Withdrawal of Participants from Study 12](#_Toc464217320)

[7.9. Definition of End of Study 13](#_Toc464217321)

[8. INTERVENTIONS / INVESTIGATIONS 13](#_Toc464217322)

[9. SAFETY REPORTING 13](#_Toc464217323)

[9.1. Definition of Serious Adverse Events 13](#_Toc464217324)

[9.2. Reporting Procedures for Serious Adverse Events 14](#_Toc464217325)

[10. STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS 14](#_Toc464217326)

[10.1. Description of Statistical Methods 14](#_Toc464217327)

[10.2. The Number of Participants 14](#_Toc464217328)

[10.3. Analysis of Outcome Measures 14](#_Toc464217329)

[11. DATA MANAGEMENT 14](#_Toc464217330)

[11.1. Access to Data 14](#_Toc464217331)

[11.2. Data Handling and Record Keeping 14](#_Toc464217332)

[12. QUALITY CONTROL AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES 15](#_Toc464217333)

[13. ETHICAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS 15](#_Toc464217334)

[13.1. Declaration of Helsinki 15](#_Toc464217335)

[13.2. Approvals 15](#_Toc464217336)

[13.3. Participant Confidentiality 15](#_Toc464217337)

[13.4. Expenses and Benefits 15](#_Toc464217338)

[13.5. Annual Progress Report 16](#_Toc464217339)

[13.6. Other Ethical Considerations 16](#_Toc464217340)

[14. FINANCE AND INSURANCE 16](#_Toc464217341)

[14.1. Funding 16](#_Toc464217342)

[14.2. Insurance 16](#_Toc464217343)

[15. PUBLICATION POLICY 17](#_Toc464217344)

[16. REFERENCES 18](#_Toc464217345)

[17. APPENDIX A: STUDY FLOW CHART 19](#_Toc464217346)

[18. APPENDIX B: SCHEDULE OF STUDY PROCEDURES 20](#_Toc464217347)

[19. APPENDIX C: AMENDMENT HISTORY 21](#_Toc464217348)

# SYNOPSIS

It may be useful to include a brief synopsis of the study for quick reference. Complete information and, if required, add additional rows.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Long Study Title** |  | |
| **Short Study Title (to be used on participant-facing documents, if applicable)** |  | |
| **Internal ref. no. (if applicable)** |  | |
| **Nature of Study Participants** |  | |
| **Intended number of participants** |  | |
| **Planned Study Period** |  | |
|  | **Objectives** | **Outcome Measures** |
| **Primary** |  |  |
| **Secondary** |  |  |

# ABBREVIATIONS

Define all unusual or ‘technical’ terms related to the project. Add or delete as appropriate to your study. Maintain alphabetical order for ease of reference.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CTRG | Clinical Trials & Research Governance, University of Oxford |
| CUREC | Central University Research Ethics Committee |
| GCP | Good Clinical Practice |
| GP | General Practitioner |
| ICF | Informed Consent Form |
| MS IDREC | Medical Sciences Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee |
| PI | Principal Investigator |
| PIS | Participant Information Sheet |
| REC | Research Ethics Committee |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |

# BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Include the following:

Brief background to the study, including scientific justification for the research.

Outline of the main research questions.

Brief description of the behavioural tasks, intervention (if applicable) and/or description of the imaging method.

Summary of findings from previous studies (if relevant) that potentially have significance. State any assumptions you are making, and any limitations to the project.

Summary of the known and potential risks and benefits, if any, to human participants.

Description of the population to be studied & the population whom the results of the project might be generalised to.

References to literature and data that are relevant to the study and that provide background for the study.

# OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME MEASURES

There is usually only one primary objective, the rest are secondary objectives.

The wording of the objectives should be clear, unambiguous and as specific as possible – the study will be judged on how, and how well, the objectives were satisfied. Complete table below with all relevant information.

Please ensure these match with those stated on the CUREC form(s).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Objectives** | **Outcome Measures** | **Timepoint(s) of evaluation of this outcome measure (if applicable)** |
| **Primary Objective** What question(s) are you trying to answer? Reviewers pay particular attention to the purpose of research, asking "What question is the research asking, is it worth asking and can it be answered?” Your answers should be succinct, excluding methodology, and realistic.  Example: To investigate how X stimulus training affects the structure and function of brain areas. | Describe the outcome measures and how/when they will be measured during the study.  Outcome measures should reflect the objectives. It is important that only one outcome measure is selected as it will be used to decide the overall results or ‘success’ of the study. The primary outcome measure should be measurable, clinically relevant to participants and widely accepted by the scientific and medical community.  Assessments of outcome measures should be described in detail in section 7. | Example: Structure of brain areas at day 0 and day 28 post-stimulus |
| **Secondary Objectives** What other question(s) are you trying to answer? Reviewers pay particular attention to the purpose of research, asking "What question is the research asking, is it worth asking and can it answer it?". Your answers should be succinct, excluding methodology, and realistic.  Example: To determine how the brain processing of X stimulus differs from the processing of Y stimulus. | As above |  |
| **Tertiary Objectives** Please add if applicable | As Above |  |

# STUDY DESIGN

Summarise the overall study design e.g. double-blind, sham-controlled, parallel design, observational. Avoid repetition as full details will be given in later sections.

Give the expected total duration of participant participation, number of visits, a description of the sequence and duration of all study visits e.g. screening, study procedure(s), follow-up.

Describe processes for collecting data, and why this method will be used (e.g. type of equipment, questionnaire, interview schedule, observation schedule).

Include a timetable for the project (as an appendix), if appropriate.

# PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT

## Study Participants

Give an overall description of the study participants, and the number you plan to recruit.

Example:

XX Healthy volunteers aged <<insert age range>>.

## Inclusion Criteria

Example criteria only (amend as appropriate):

* Participant is willing and able to give informed consent for participation in the study.
* Healthy adults, Male or Female, aged 18 to 60 years.
* Not currently taking any medications (except the contraceptive pill).
* Additional study specific criteria as required.

## Exclusion Criteria

Example criteria only (amend as appropriate):

The participant may not enter the study if ANY of the following apply:

* Specify any diseases/disorders/ conditions that would preclude entry into the study.
* Pregnant or breast feeding
* History or current psychiatric illness
* History or current neurological condition (e.g. epilepsy)
* Additional study specific criteria as required.

# STUDY PROCEDURES

Describe all study procedures and assessments in detail in the sections below, or change sections as necessary. Add visit numbers as appropriate.

Add schedule of procedures as an appendix, if appropriate.

## Recruitment

Describe how potential participants will be identified, approached, screened and recruited.

Example: Participants will be recruited by word of mouth, emails to departmental mailing lists and posters located in University Departments.

## Screening and Eligibility Assessment

Specify the maximum duration allowed between screening and recruitment (if applicable).

Describe the screening procedures in detail. If applicable, specify pre-screening procedures such as demographics, medical history and physical examination.

If any screening procedures (such as blood sampling) require prior informed consent, then this section should be moved to between ‘Informed Consent’ and ‘Randomisation’.

## Informed Consent

You need to specify who will take informed consent, how and when it will be taken. Informed Consent must be obtained prior to any study related procedures being undertaken.

Example:

The participant must personally sign and date the latest approved version of the Informed Consent form before any study specific procedures are performed.

Written and verbal versions of the Participant Information and Informed Consent will be presented to the participants detailing no less than: the exact nature of the study; what it will involve for the participant; the implications and constraints of the protocol; the known side effects and any risks involved in taking part. It will be clearly stated that the participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason, and with no obligation to give the reason for withdrawal.

The participant will be allowed as much time as wished to consider the information, and the opportunity to question the Investigator, their GP or other independent parties to decide whether they will participate in the study. Written Informed Consent will then be obtained by means of participant dated signature and dated signature of the person who presented and obtained the Informed Consent. The person who obtained the consent must be suitably qualified and experienced, and have been authorised to do so by the Principal Investigator. A copy of the signed Informed Consent will be given to the participant. The original signed form will be retained at the study site.

## Randomisation

Describe how randomisation is going to be carried out, and when (if applicable, otherwise delete this section).

If randomisation of a participant is unblinded during the study, state whether data for that participant will be admitted to analysis or not.

If participants will not be randomised, please delete this section entirely.

## Baseline Assessments

Specify and describe all baseline assessments. They must reflect the objectives and outcome measures.

If there will only be one study visit, this section should be renamed ‘Study Visit’ and full details of this visit be included. The next section ‘Subsequent Visits’ can then be deleted.

## Subsequent Visits

Specify when participants will be followed up and what assessments will be conducted. Specify if they are visits, telephone assessments, or home visits by the study staff. Add visit numbers and window periods if applicable. **Clearly number these visits.**

For each visit (including baseline), consider inclusion of the following, where appropriate:

* eligibility check
* assessment of outcome measures
* assessments of safety including general (e.g. physical examination), specific safety assessments (e.g. adverse event collection)
* dispensing of study product
* assessment of compliance with study product
* recording of concomitant medications (if applicable)

Provide a detailed description of each of the assessments to be carried out

## Sample Handling

If not mentioned previously, describe the samples that will be taken from each participant (e.g. blood, urine, tissue), the volume of sample, and the frequency of sampling. Give brief details as to how the sample will be processed and stored once taken (including whether it will be rendered acellular and, if so, when), who will have access (i.e. Study team only for this project, or will it be stored long-term for use in future ethically approved studies), and duration of storage. Provide an overview of the laboratory analyses that will be performed.

If no samples will be taken, please delete this section entirely.

## Discontinuation/Withdrawal of Participants from Study

Example:

Each participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the Investigator may discontinue a participant from the study at any time if the Investigator considers it necessary for any reason including:

Delete/add as appropriate

* Pregnancy
* Ineligibility (either arising during the study or retrospectively having been overlooked at screening)
* Significant protocol deviation
* Significant non-compliance with treatment regimen or study requirements
* Withdrawal of Consent
* Loss to follow up

Specify any procedures and observations that will continue to be required until the end of the study. Why will this be necessary?

State whether withdrawal from the study will result in exclusion of the data for that participant from analysis.

State whether or not withdrawn participants will be replaced.

The reason for withdrawal will be recorded in the Case Report Form.

## Definition of End of Study

The definition of end of study must be provided. In most cases the end of study will be the date of the last visit of the last participant. Any exceptions should be justified.

Example:

The end of study is the date of the last visit / telephone follow up / home visit of the last participant.

# INTERVENTIONS / INVESTIGATIONS

N.B - Interventions are procedures that affect physiology and include administration of a drug or surgical procedures.

If there are no interventions, then delete this section.

# SAFETY REPORTING

Consider whether the study methodology, interventions or investigations, may be associated with any serious adverse events. If yes, then include this section, otherwise remove.

## Definition of Serious Adverse Events

A serious adverse event is any untoward medical occurrence that:

* results in death
* is life-threatening
* requires inpatient hospitalisation or prolongation of existing hospitalisation
* results in persistent or significant disability/incapacity
* consists of a congenital anomaly or birth defect.

Other ‘important medical events’ may also be considered serious if they jeopardise the participant or require an intervention to prevent one of the above consequences.

NOTE: The term "life-threatening" in the definition of "serious" refers to an event in which the participant was at risk of death at the time of the event; it does not refer to an event which hypothetically might have caused death if it were more severe.

## Reporting Procedures for Serious Adverse Events

A serious adverse event (SAE) occurring to a participant should be reported to CTRG and the MS IDREC where in the opinion of the Principal Investigator the event was ‘related’ (resulted from administration of any of the research procedures) and ‘unexpected’ (the type of event is not listed in the protocol as an expected occurrence). Reports of related and unexpected SAEs should be submitted within 15 days of the Principal Investigator becoming aware of the event,

# STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS

The sub-headings given below are suggestions. Add/delete as appropriate.

## Description of Statistical Methods

Describe the statistical methods to be employed, including timing of any planned interim analysis(es).

## The Number of Participants

State the approximate number of participants required to fulfil the study objectives. Justify choice of sample size, including reflections on (or calculations of) the power of the study. It is the primary outcome that determines the sample size needed. Take into account any potential withdrawals.

## Analysis of Outcome Measures

Describe analysis of primary and secondary outcome measures. Include details as to which participant data will be used (e.g. all participants, including/excluding those that withdrew consent).

# DATA MANAGEMENT

## Access to Data

Direct access will be granted to authorised representatives from the University of Oxford and any host institution for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure compliance with regulations.

## Data Handling and Record Keeping

Describe method of data entry/management. Distinguish between research data and any personal data that will be collected (e.g. on consent forms). Give storage duration and location. If participants are anonymised by a code, state whether or not a linkage record will be retained (and how).

Example:

All study data will be entered on a <<quote software e.g. Excel spreadsheet >>. The participants will be identified by a unique study specific number and/or code in any database. The name and any other identifying detail will NOT be included in any study data electronic file.

# QUALITY CONTROL AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

If required, provide details of how data monitoring and other quality control measures will be performed. Example:

The study will be conducted in accordance with the current approved protocol, relevant regulations and standard operating procedures.

# ETHICAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

## Declaration of Helsinki

The Investigator will ensure that this study is conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. NB. The 2008 Declaration of Helsinki provides detail on what must be included in a protocol: funding, sponsorship, affiliations and potential conflicts of interest, incentives to participate and compensation for harm.

## Approvals

Consider the following text:

The protocol, informed consent form, participant information sheet and any proposed advertising material will be submitted to the MS IDREC, and host institution(s) for written approval.

The Investigator will submit and, where necessary, obtain approval from the above parties for all substantial amendments to the original approved documents.

## Participant Confidentiality

Example:

The study staff will ensure that the participants’ anonymity is maintained. The participants will be identified only a participant ID number on all study documents and any electronic database. All documents will be stored securely and only accessible by study staff and authorised personnel. The study will comply with the Data Protection Act, which requires data to be anonymised as soon as it is practical to do so.

## Expenses and Benefits

Detail all intended payments to participants and any other benefits (Declaration of Helsinki requirement).

Example:

Participants will be paid < £X > for their participation in the research. Reasonable travel expenses for any visits additional to normal care will be reimbursed on production of receipts, or a mileage allowance provided as appropriate.

## Annual Progress Report

The PI shall submit on request, a Progress Report to the MS IDREC with a copy to CTRG.

## Other Ethical Considerations

Include any other general and study-specific ethical considerations, e.g. involvement of vulnerable participants.

# FINANCE AND INSURANCE

## Funding

Describe financing arrangements.

## Insurance

The University of Oxford has a specialist insurance policy in place which would operate in the event of any participant suffering harm as a result of their involvement in the research (Newline Underwriting Management Ltd, at Lloyd’s of London).

# PUBLICATION POLICY

The publication policy should cover authorship, acknowledgements, and review procedures for scientific publications. If there is a department or institution policy, or agreement, the protocol can refer to it. If the study results form part of a Masters or DPhil dissertation, please refer to Departmental policy on publications.

Consider describing how study results may be disseminated to study participants.

Example:

The Investigators will be involved in reviewing drafts of the manuscripts, abstracts, press releases and any other publications arising from the study. Authors will acknowledge that the study was funded by < >. Authorship will be determined in accordance with the ICMJE guidelines and other contributors will be acknowledged.

# REFERENCES

Insert references used in text (preferably numbered, or in alphabetical order of first author).

# APPENDIX A: STUDY FLOW CHART

Optional

# APPENDIX B: SCHEDULE OF STUDY PROCEDURES

*Optional -* Alter as required, delete if not wanted

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Procedures** | **Visits (insert visit numbers as appropriate)** | | | | |
| **Visit timing**  **e.g. Day 0** | **e.g. Day 7** |  |  |  |
| **Screening** | **Baseline** |  |  |  |
| Informed consent |  |  |  |  |  |
| Demographics |  |  |  |  |  |
| Medical history |  |  |  |  |  |
| Physical examination |  |  |  |  |  |
| ECG |  |  |  |  |  |
| Eligibility assessment |  |  |  |  |  |
| Randomisation |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessment 1 (*describe*)  e.g. MRI |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessment 2 (*describe*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessment 3 (*describe*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessment 4 (*describe*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Questionnaires/behavioural tasks |  |  |  |  |  |

# APPENDIX C: AMENDMENT HISTORY

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Amendment No.** | **Protocol Version No.** | **Date issued** | **Author(s) of changes** | **Details of Changes made** |
|  |  |  |  |  |

List details of all protocol amendments here whenever a new version of the protocol is produced. This is not necessary prior to initial REC submission.