



# **MRS Guidelines for Qualitative Research**

**Including observational, ethnographic and deliberative research**

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MRS is the world's largest association for people and organisations that provide or use market, social and opinion research, business intelligence and customer insight.



MRS  
The Old Trading House  
15 Northburgh Street  
London EC1V 0JR

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7490 4911  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 0608  
Email: [codeline@mrs.org.uk](mailto:codeline@mrs.org.uk)  
Website: [www.mrs.org.uk](http://www.mrs.org.uk)

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## **Introduction**

These Guidelines interpret the MRS Code of Conduct (revised 2014) and provide additional best practice guidance. Unless otherwise stated, Guidelines are not binding. Their aim is to promote professionalism in the conduct of research.

Research is founded upon the willing co-operation of the public, businesses and other organisations. It relies on the confidence of those involved that it is conducted honestly, objectively, without unwelcome intrusion and without harm to participants. Its purpose is to collect and analyse information and not to create sales or to influence the opinions of anyone participating.

The general public and other interested parties are entitled to complete assurance that every research project is carried out in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct and that their rights and privacy are respected.

Rules from the MRS Code of Conduct applicable in each section of this document are stated in bold. These rules are binding on MRS members and MRS Company Partners and breaches may result in disciplinary action. The guidance that follows the rules provides interpretation and additional best practice. Members and Company Partners are reminded that this document is designed to complement the MRS Code of Conduct and should not be consulted in isolation.

As specified in the MRS Code, it is the responsibility of the researcher to keep abreast of any legislation which could affect research and to ensure that all those involved in a project are aware of and agree to abide by the MRS Code of Conduct.

This material is provided for information only. It is not legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Specific legal advice should be taken in relation to specific issues.

## **The Principles of the MRS Code of Conduct:**

1. Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.
2. Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.
3. Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.
4. Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their
5. Researchers shall respect the rights and well being of all individuals.
6. Researchers shall ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.
7. Researchers shall balance the needs of individuals, clients, and their professional activities.
8. Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgement in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.
9. Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.
10. Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession.

## Definitions

Qualitative research is defined as marketing and social research conducted whereby:

- the basic methodology involves techniques which seek to reach understanding through observation, dialogue and evocation, rather than measurement, and
- where the data collection process involves open-ended, non-directive techniques (not structured questionnaires), and
- where the data analysis output is descriptive and not statistical

Ethnographic observation is a qualitative research method in which the researcher goes into the field to observe and/or interact with research subjects in their natural setting as they go about normal activities.

The researcher can limit participation to observation, with limited or no questioning of the subjects, or can join in as an active member of the community being observed. [Definition from ISO 20252]

Deliberative research or Deliberative methods describe a wide range practices that combine quantitative and qualitative methods to allow participants/participants to make informed decisions or judgements on the topic of the research.

### *Attributes of Deliberative Methods*

- combination of group discussion, workshops, events and individual polling;
- provision of information to inform and guide participants;
- feedback/suggestions/responses from groups shared with all participants during the event;
- Events are longer than traditional groups (from three hours to a number of days);
- Groups may be reconvened following further deliberation;
- Individuals may be re-pollled after a period of time to measure effect of deliberations;
- for large projects, the sample will be recruited to represent population.

## **Definitions from the MRS Code of Conduct:**

### **Anonymisation:**

Anonymisation is the process of removing, obscuring, aggregating or altering identifiers to prevent the likely identification using reasonable means of the individuals to whom the data originally related.

### **Child:**

A child is a person under the age of 16.

### **Client:**

Client includes any individual, organisation, department or division, including any belonging to the same organisation as the member, which is responsible for commissioning or applying the results from a research project.

### **Data Collection Process:**

A data collection process is any process used to obtain information from or about participants. It includes, but is not limited to, interviews, questionnaires, discussion guides, and stimulus materials, as well as passive data collection.

### **Identity:**

The identity of a participant includes, as well as their name and/or address, any other information which offers a reasonable likelihood that they can be identified by any person or organisation who has access to the information.

### **Informed consent:**

Informed consent is a process by which a participant voluntarily confirms his or her willingness to take part in a particular project, after having been informed of all aspects of the project that are relevant to their decision to participate.

### **Member:**

A Member is an individual who has been admitted to membership of MRS in one of the categories set out the MRS Articles of Association.

For the purposes of applying this Code, an organisation with MRS members that has signed the MRS Company Partner Service Quality Commitment that applies throughout the organisation shall be treated as a Member.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is the supervising of activities (such as data collection) to ensure that they meet required objectives and performance targets.

### **Participant:**

A participant is any individual or organisation from or about whom data are collected.

### **Research:**

Research is the collection, use, or analysis of information about individuals or organisations intended to establish facts, acquire knowledge or reach conclusions.

### **Responsible Adult:**

A responsible adult is an individual who has personal accountability for the well-being of a child, for example a parent, guardian, teacher, nanny or grandparent.

### ***Definitions from the Data Protection Act 1998 used in the MRS Code of Conduct***

#### **Personal Data**

Data which relate to a living individual who can be identified-

(a) from those data, or

(b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller,

and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.

#### **Data Subject**

An individual who is the subject of personal data.

#### **Data Controller**



A person who (either alone or jointly or in common with other persons) determines the purposes for which and the manner in which any personal data are, or are to be, processed.

### **Data Processor**

Any person (other than an employee of the data controller) who processes the data on behalf of the data controller.

### **Processing**

Obtaining, recording or holding the information or data or carrying out any operation or set of operations on the information or data, including—

- (a) organisation, adaptation or alteration of the information or data,
- (b) retrieval, consultation or use of the information or data,
- (c) disclosure of the information or data by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, or
- (d) alignment, combination, blocking, erasure or destruction of the information or data.

### **Third party**

Any person other than—

- (a) the data subject,
- (b) the data controller, or
- (c) any data processor or other person authorised to process data for the data controller or processor.

## **1: Recruitment**

### A: Planning Recruitment

#### **The Rules**

- 1. Members must ensure that research conforms to the national and international legislation relevant to a given project, including in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 or other comparable legislation applicable outside the UK.**
- 3. Members must act honestly in their professional activities.**
- 9. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of themselves, clients, and sub-contractors are governed by a written contract and/or internal commissioning document.**

*Comment: The Data Protection Act 1998 requires contracts for the processing of personal data to be in writing.*

- 18. Members must ensure that participants are provided with sufficient information to allow informed consent to be given. This includes:**
  - a. the name of the organisation or individual responsible for data collection;**
  - b. the general subject of the data collection;**
  - c. the purpose of the data collection;**
  - d. whether the data collection is to be recorded and/or observed;**
  - e. who is likely to have access to live or recorded information;**
  - f. the likely length in minutes of the data collection, if asked;**
  - g. any costs likely to be incurred by the participant; and**
  - h. an assurance that the activity is being conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct.**
- 30. Members must ensure that participant details are not passed on to a third party for research or any other purposes without the prior consent of the participant.**
- 31. Members must ensure that follow-up contact with a participant is carried out only if the participant's permission has been obtained at the previous**

point of data collection. The only exception to this is re-contact for quality control purposes.

*Comment: Any re-contact question should be agreed at the design stage with the client to cover any planned or possible consequential projects.*

**32. Members must ensure that any re-contact matches the assurances given to participants at the time that permission was gained e.g. when re-contact was to occur, the purpose and by whom.**

**35. Members must ensure that participants are not misled when being asked to take part in a project.**

**43. There are some situations where observers could adversely affect participants' interests and/or wellbeing, and in such instances, members must**

- a. ensure that participants are told at an appropriate stage the identity of any observer who might be present during the exercise.
- b. where observers may know participants, ensure that participants are informed before the start of the data collection that they are to be observed, with a warning that the observers may include clients who already know them.
- c. where observers know, or are likely to know, participants, ensure that observers are introduced before the data collection begins and participants given a chance to withdraw.

*Comment: The issue of anonymity and recognition is a particular problem in business-to-business and employee research and as such greater care should be taken for such projects.*

**58. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that all hard copy and electronic files containing personal data are held, transferred and processed securely in accordance with the relevant data retention policies and/or contractual obligations.**

## **Guidance**

1. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and to ensure adherence to 1, most recruiters and agencies that recruit participants must notify the Information

Commissioner's Office that they act as Data Controllers, unless they only recruit on behalf of other agencies and do not hold or retain participant details.

3. In accordance with rules 6 and 43, the identity of any potential observers (if known) should be disclosed at the time of recruitment where the presence of the observers may adversely affect the interest or wellbeing of the participant.
4. Informed consent, from potential participants, to participate in any research exercise should be gathered in a verifiable form (for example, written, recorded) which can be referred to in case of any doubt.

## B: Client databases

### **The Rules**

- 10. Members must not disclose the identity of clients or any confidential information about clients without the client's permission, unless there is a legal obligation to do so.**
- 11. Where files of identifiable individuals are used, e.g. client databases, members must ensure that the source of the personal data is revealed at an appropriate point, if requested by participants. This overrides the right to client anonymity.**

### **Guidance**

1. Before agreeing to the receipt of client databases, the researcher or recruitment agency should ask their client (the data controller) to confirm that their notification with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) includes 'research purposes' and thus that they have the right to process customer information for research purposes.
2. If they ask, participants must be told the primary source of the list, as stated in B7. This means telling them the name of the client company whose list it is, though this can be revealed at the end of the interview/group discussion rather than the beginning. This instruction must be contained within the recruitment instructions. If the client needs to remain anonymous at recruitment stage, then the participant should be told this and offered the opportunity to proceed on that basis.
3. If a supplied list contains addresses that are incorrect, or if an individual on the list has died, then that information may be passed back to the data controller, e.g., the client. Corrected data such as new addresses cannot be passed back. In such circumstances the data controller should conduct a separate data cleansing exercise. Other incorrect information, for example about brand usership, cannot be passed back to the client.
4. Researchers and clients should agree the definitions of customers/potential participants to be included on the lists. It is recommended that the researcher or recruitment agency checks if their client includes ex-directory telephone numbers and numbers that have been excluded by the Telephone Preference Service (TPS). There is no obligation to remove numbers that are ex-directory or listed on the TPS, but some participants may object or complain on that basis. Researchers

should also ask if their client is aware of any problems with the lists and advises their client not to provide any personal customer information that is not relevant to the study.

5. Clients should send informative letters on their own letterhead to all customers likely to be contacted before recruitment starts. This is particularly important when the customer information could be regarded as sensitive or private. It is also good practice for participants to be able to ring a client freephone telephone number if they want to opt out of the study.
6. Researchers/recruitment agencies should build sufficient time into the setting up of recruitment, to allow for lists to be produced, telephone searches to be done and recruitment to be completed satisfactorily.

## **2: During the Research Exercise**

### A: Ensuring Emotional Well-Being

#### **The Rules**

**6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**

**10. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of themselves, clients, and sub-contractors are governed by a written contract and/or internal commissioning document.**

*Comment: The Data Protection Act 1998 requires contracts for the processing of personal data to be in writing.*

**18. Members must ensure that participants are provided with sufficient information to allow informed consent to be given. This includes:**

- a. the name of the organisation or individual responsible for data collection;
- b. the general subject of the data collection;
- c. the purpose of the data collection;
- d. whether the data collection is to be recorded and/or observed;
- e. who is likely to have access to live or recorded information;
- f. the likely length in minutes of the data collection, if asked;
- g. any costs likely to be incurred by the participant; and
- h. an assurance that the activity is being conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct.

*Comment: the organisation or individual responsible for data collection is the data controller as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998.*

**33. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure all of the following:**

- a. that data collection processes are fit for purpose and clients have been advised accordingly;
- b. that the design and content of data collection processes are appropriate for the audience being researched;

- c. **that participants are able to provide information in a way that reflects the view they want to express, including don't know/ prefer not to say where appropriate;**
- d. **that participants are not led towards a particular point of view;**
- e. **that responses are capable of being interpreted in an unambiguous way; and**
- f. **that personal data collected are relevant and not excessive.**

**34. Members must ensure that participants are informed about any recording, monitoring or observation at recruitment and at the beginning of a data collection process.**

*Comment: This does not include monitoring (listening to but not recording) telephone interviews for the purpose of quality control where interviewers have been informed that such monitoring takes place.*

**35. Members must ensure that participants are not misled when being asked to take part in a project.**

**36. Members must ensure that a participant's right to withdraw from a project at any stage is respected.**

**37. Members must ensure that participants are able to check without difficulty the identity and bona fides of any individual and/or their employer conducting a project (including any sub-contractors).**

## **Guidance**

1. The potentially intrusive nature of qualitative research means that emotional wellbeing is an area of particular concern. The objectives of any study do not give the researcher a special right to intrude on a participant's privacy nor to abandon normal respect for an individual's values.
2. In terms of sensitivity, topic areas can be divided into:
  - those topics that are judged sensitive to everyone, because of the nature of that subject;
  - those topics that may be sensitive to a group for cultural, religious or political reasons; and



- those topics that may be sensitive to a particular individual, because of that individual's past history, behaviour and attitudes.
3. In the case of the latter, researchers cannot necessarily take precautions in advance of the interviews, but can treat each case sensitively and individually, giving participants a genuine opportunity to withdraw. Any topic can potentially be sensitive to an individual. Participants who feel their privacy and personal sensitivities are not being recognised or respected may be less forthcoming. Equally, participants who feel they have not been treated with honesty and openness may feel patronised. In both cases, the nature of their responses may be affected. In addition, these participants may feel less willing to participate in further research.
  4. In accordance with 6 and 18, where the topic is judged to be sensitive to most people, participants must be told explicitly the subject and content of the discussion.
  5. In accordance with rule6, where the subject is difficult, emotional or stressful for participants, researchers should consider undertaking a debrief or providing information on follow-up support.
  6. In accordance with 34 and 36, invitations should always make reference to participants' rights to withdraw and withhold information and must state when recording is to be used and whether observers are likely to be present.
  7. Researchers should not ask participants to reveal unnecessary personal identifiable information during the interview or discussion.
  8. Moderators must respect participants' requests not to answer specific questions and to withdraw from the research exercise if they wish to do so.
  9. Participants should feel they have a choice whether to participate in exercises or tasks where they may feel particularly embarrassed or uncomfortable, e.g. role playing exercises, touching other participants, sitting or kneeling on the floor.
  10. In accordance with Rules B17 and B34, assurances as to the length of the interview must be honoured and, in the event of the discussion or interview running over time, participants should feel they have the opportunity to leave.
  11. If the participant asks who the client is, the researcher must not lie. If there is a concern that giving participants information about the client company may affect

responses, then the participants need not be told at the beginning of the group/interview but should be told at the end.

## B: Observation of Interviews and Group Discussions

### **The Rules**

- 1. Members must ensure that research conforms to the national and international legislation relevant to a given project, including in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 or other comparable legislation applicable outside the UK.**
  
- 18. Members must ensure that participants are provided with sufficient information to allow informed consent to be given. This includes:**
  - a. the name of the organisation or individual responsible for data collection;**
  - b. the general subject of the data collection;**
  - c. the purpose of the data collection;**
  - d. whether the data collection is to be recorded and/or observed;**
  - e. who is likely to have access to live or recorded information;**
  - f. the likely length in minutes of the data collection, if asked;**
  - g. any costs likely to be incurred by the participant; and**
  - h. an assurance that the activity is being conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct.**

**Comment: the organisation or individual responsible for data collection is the data controller as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998.**

- 41. If Members have agreed with clients that observers are to be present, members must inform all observers about their legal and ethical responsibilities.**
  
- 42. Members must make clear to participants the capacity in which observers are present; clients must be presented as such, even if they are also researchers and/or members of MRS.**
  
- 43. There are some situations where observers could adversely affect participants' interests and/or wellbeing, and in such instances, members must:**
  - a. ensure that participants are told at an appropriate stage the identity of any observer who might be present during the exercise.**

- b. where observers may know participants, ensure that participants are informed before the start of the data collection that they are to be observed, with a warning that the observers may include clients who already know them.**
- c. where observers know, or are likely to know, participants, ensure that observers are introduced before the data collection begins and participants given a chance to withdraw.**

***Comment: The issue of anonymity and recognition is a particular problem in business-to-business and employee research and as such greater care should be taken for such projects.***

## **Guidance**

1. The researcher and their client should consider carefully whether the benefits of observation outweigh the disadvantages.
2. If the client wishes to observe interviews or groups for quality control or training reasons, then consideration should be given to the other options such as listening to recordings, reading group transcripts (following the guidelines on Primary Data and Recording of Interviews and Group Discussions in this document), or setting up dummy interviews/groups.
3. So that the researcher can assess the observer effect and interpret the group/interview responses with more confidence, only some of the groups/interviews on a project – ideally no more than half – should be observed. Where this is difficult to achieve, e.g. in small samples, then researcher and client should be mindful of the observer effect when interpreting the data. The potential effect on participants applies both with 'covert' (via viewing theatres) and with 'visible' (in the same room) observations.
4. Visible observation of interviews (for example, where the observer is present in the room) with two or three people can be particularly intrusive and therefore researchers should only consider such observation as acceptable in exceptional circumstances and ideally only for some of the interviews on that project. There should ideally only be one observer per group/interview.
5. In accordance with 1, observers must not to note down participants' personal data without their consent.

6. Researchers should advise observers prior to attending qualitative research sessions (in the same room as participants) how best to ensure participants' well-being and minimise the observer effect. Consideration should be given to aspects such as style of clothes, promptness, where the observer sits, whether the observer has a role on the group/interview, paying attention to all comments equally, note-taking and when questions may be asked.
7. When observing in a viewing facility, Researchers should advise observers of the potential damage to the group/interview dynamics from any form of interruption such as noise or light from behind the mirror, entering the interviewing room during the group/interview or sending in notes or slipping them under the door.
8. Researchers must advise observers of their responsibilities:
  - if any observer recognises any participant, they must leave the observation room (apart from when pre-introduced in business/employee research exercises), and
  - audio, visual or written records or any other participant generated material taken away afterwards by clients (with all of the participants' consent) must only be used for the purposes to which participants agreed that the recordings could be used; this must be set out in writing in an agreement between the researcher and client.

## **The Rules**

**42. Members must make clear to participants the capacity in which observers are present; clients must be presented as such, even if they are also researchers and/or members of MRS.**

**43. There are some situations where observers could adversely affect participants' interests and/or wellbeing, and in such instances, members must**

- a. ensure that participants are told at an appropriate stage the identity of any observer who might be present during the exercise.**
- b. where observers may know participants, ensure that participants are informed before the start of the data collection that they are to be observed, with a warning that the observers may include clients who already know them.**
- c. where observers know, or are likely to know, participants, ensure that observers are introduced before the data collection begins and participants given a chance to withdraw.**

***Comment: The issue of anonymity and recognition is a particular problem in business-to-business and employee research and as such greater care should be taken for such projects.***

## **Guidance**

1. Researchers should give a general explanation of why observers are present and what they will do (e.g. take notes). This includes both covert and visible observation.
2. Researchers must reassure participants about the confidentiality of their responses and their personal details.
3. Clients should respect Researchers' recommendations that there are no observers on a particular project if there is a strong concern that the client's presence will adversely affect the nature of the response.

## **The Rules**

- 1. Members must ensure that research conforms to the national and international legislation relevant to a given project, including in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 or other comparable legislation applicable outside the UK.**
  
- 18. Members must ensure that participants are provided with sufficient information to allow informed consent to be given. This includes:**
  - a. the name of the organisation or individual responsible for data collection;**
  - b. the general subject of the data collection;**
  - c. the purpose of the data collection;**
  - d. whether the data collection is to be recorded and/or observed;**
  - e. who is likely to have access to live or recorded information;**
  - f. the likely length in minutes of the data collection, if asked;**
  - g. any costs likely to be incurred by the participant; and**
  - h. an assurance that the activity is being conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct.**

***Comment: the organisation or individual responsible for data collection is the data controller as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998.***

- 26. Members must ensure that the anonymity of participants is preserved unless participants have given their informed consent for their details to be revealed or for attributable comments to be passed on.**
  
- 27. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that anonymisation is effective, with reference to developments in technology and to the data environment into which data are released.**

***Comment: This rule applies to anonymisation undertaken by members and to anonymisation of data sets undertaken by clients prior to analysis by members. Members are referred to the ICO's Anonymisation Code of Practice.***

***Comment: Members should be particularly careful that they do not inadvertently identify participants. For example this may arise:***

- ***where sample sizes are very small (such as business and employee research);***
- ***where data contains sufficient contextual information to permit identification (such as attributes or descriptions of participants);***
- ***where data can be matched with publicly available information (such as social media profiles); or***
- ***where data can be matched with other sources (such as transaction histories held by clients).***

**28. If participants have given consent for data to be passed on in a form which allows them to be personally identified, members must:**

- a. demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the data will only be used for the purpose for which the data were collected**
- b. and inform participants as to what will be revealed, to whom and for what purpose.**

**34. Members must ensure that participants are informed about any recording, monitoring or observation at recruitment and at the beginning of a data collection process.**

***Comment: This does not include monitoring (listening to but not recording) telephone interviews for the purpose of quality control where interviewers have been informed that such monitoring takes place.***

## **Guidance**

1. The Data Protection Act 1998 stipulates that participants have a right to know how their personal data (which includes recordings of their voice and/or appearance) will be used. In accordance with the legislation and 1, Researchers have a responsibility to inform participants accordingly and ensure that the data will only be used in the way that participants have been told it will be used.
2. In accordance with 26, the anonymity of participants must be preserved unless they have given their informed consent for their details to be revealed or for attributable comments to be passed on. Researchers should take responsibility for



all primary data. Materials resulting from projective techniques and produced in groups or depths are considered to be primary data.

3. In accordance with 26, Researchers must ensure that qualitative data labelled as anonymised does not contain any identifiable data. Qualitative primary data are often difficult to anonymise because an individual's identity rests in their appearance, their voice, and in some cases, their turn of phrase.
4. In accordance with 34, Researchers must ensure that qualitative groups are only recorded with the consent of the participants. Viewing facilities must be reminded of this requirement.
5. In accordance with 26, any material which identifies participants must not be released by the Researchers unless explicit permission has previously been obtained from the participants involved.
6. In accordance with 28, researchers must ensure that participants are given as much relevant information as possible about the future use of primary data in particular
  - to whom they are to be given
  - to whom they are to be shown
  - for what purposes they are to be used
7. Researchers should inform clients of restrictions on the use of primary data at the start of the project where there is any possibility that the client may later ask to see copies of these.
8. Researchers should ensure that sufficient contracts are in place to allow recompense from the client for any costs arising from a request to obtain permission from participants for release of primary data.

### **3: Other Types of Research**

#### A: Observational Research

##### **The Rules**

- 1. Members must ensure that research conforms to the national and international legislation relevant to a given project, including in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 or other comparable legislation applicable outside the UK.**
  
- 19. Members must ensure that all of the following are undertaken during remote data collection in spaces accessible by the public:**
  - a. Clear and prominent notices or statements must be displayed or presented in spaces where the data collection is taking place.**
  - b. Notices and statements must include the individual/organisation responsible for the data collection, including contact information and the purpose(s) of the data collection.**
  - c. Data collection must be limited to the spaces intended to be included in the project.**

**Comment: this rule applies to remote data collection in physical spaces, such as shopping centres, and online spaces, such as forums and social networking pages.**

##### **Guidance**

There are two types of observation: Participant, where the individual is interviewed as well as observed and Non-participant, where the individual is observed but not interviewed. Audio and visual recordings in any format of individuals are defined as personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998.

When it comes to participant observation, all the normal rules and practices apply (as detailed in sections 1 and 2 of this guidance).

For non-participant observation, such as using CCTV cameras for research observation, in addition to the rules above:

1. The quality of the recorded image should be appropriate to meet the purpose of the surveillance.

2. Images must be retained no longer than is necessary.
3. Disclosure of recorded images to third parties must only be made in limited and prescribed circumstances and with the individual's consent.
4. Adequate security measures must be in place to ensure against any unauthorized processing, loss, destruction or damage to the data.
5. In accordance with 1, researchers who use CCTV must follow Security Industry Authority licensing requirements where applicable. For more information please see [www.sia.gov.uk](http://www.sia.gov.uk).

## B: Ethnographic research

### **The Rules**

- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**
- 9. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of themselves, clients, and sub-contractors are governed by a written contract and/or internal commissioning document.**

***Comment: The Data Protection Act 1998 requires contracts for the processing of personal data to be in writing.***

- 34. Members must ensure that participants are informed about any recording, monitoring or observation at recruitment and at the beginning of a data collection process.**

***Comment: This does not include monitoring (listening to but not recording) telephone interviews for the purpose of quality control where interviewers have been informed that such monitoring takes place.***

### **Guidance**

1. Researchers should provide clients and sponsors of research with a clear account of any limitations involved in specific research projects.
2. Researchers should avoid situations where they could become vulnerable to accusations of misconduct (especially when working in participants' homes) or where they became over-involved at an emotional level with the observed.
3. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and 1, participants must be told what will happen to any data gathered in the process of observation.
4. Researchers should inform participants of the extended nature of ethnographic research at the point of recruitment before agreeing to participation and should be made aware of their 'right to withdraw' at any time.
5. Researchers should inform participants (at the point of recruitment) of any activities they will be asked to engage in or undertake.

6. Researchers should inform participants of the purpose and rationale for observation of their behaviour.
7. Where children and young people are to be the subject of observation, for instance where the researcher is living with a family, the MRS Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People should also be consulted.

## C: Deliberative Research

### **The Rules**

- 8. Members must take reasonable steps to design research to the specification and/or quality standards agreed with the client.**
  
- 33. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure all of the following:**
  - a. that data collection processes are fit for purpose and clients have been advised accordingly;**
  - b. that the design and content of data collection processes are appropriate for the audience being researched;**
  - c. that participants are able to provide information in a way that reflects the view they want to express, including don't know/ prefer not to say where appropriate;**
  - d. that participants are not led towards a particular point of view;**
  - e. that responses are capable of being interpreted in an unambiguous way; and**
  - f. that personal data collected are relevant and not excessive.**

### **Guidance**

*Note: Deliberative research projects may range from very small local events to national exercises. The following guidelines will be particularly suitable for large projects and/or for potentially contentious subject areas. Researchers should adopt a risk based approach particularly where the exercise itself or the results it generates are likely to be subject to public comment or challenge.*

#### Commissioning and Project Design

1. Researchers should ensure that clients and all other third parties involved in the development and implementation of the project are fully aware of their responsibilities and clearly outline what is required of them (and when) within the proposal.
2. Researchers should provide with proposals a detailed initial risk assessment which includes risk to both clients and research suppliers including the possible time that may be spent on designing the materials to be presented to participants (often referred to as participants) and also the time that may be spent defending processes and the results of deliberative projects. This should be discussed and

modified as appropriate with clients. The need to regularly review and update the risk log should be built into the project process.

3. Where projects are especially complex, involve a wide number of stakeholders and/or need to meet very specific timings, researchers should consider using an established project management process, which is regularly updated throughout the life-cycle of the project.

### Stakeholder Involvement

1. Researchers should work with clients to consider whether and what extent stakeholders need to be involved in the project.
2. If stakeholders are required, researchers should ensure that relevant / key stakeholders are identified. It is the responsibility of clients to ensure that any list of stakeholders identified is comprehensive, but researchers should not rely on clients' choices alone and should ensure that stakeholders cover important viewpoints that may exist upon the subject under scrutiny. There should be a written audit trail of why stakeholders are included or not and while the final choice will be the responsibility of the client, the researchers should take sufficient steps to ensure that clients have considered the implications of including/not including each stakeholder.
3. Researchers should bring to clients' attention the potential imbalance or biases in arguments if positions and assumptions are not challenged, where appropriate. Also, researchers should take reasonable steps to bring to the clients' attention, any prominence or unfair prominence of argument on one or more of the sides being presented.
4. Researchers should take reasonable steps to ensure that the views and stance of those stakeholders who refuse or are unable to participate are taken into consideration in materials development.
5. Researchers, with clients, should decide upon, and document, contingency plans should one or more key stakeholders refuse to contribute/comment, miss a deadline or withdraw from a project part-way through.

### Materials

1. Researchers should ensure that materials include, where appropriate:
  - Accepted facts around which there is consensus.

- Differing views or interpretations due to different academic, commercial or political disagreements, including views of official bodies and citizen or community voices.
  - Well-referenced information from credible, verifiable and trustworthy sources.
2. In addition to stakeholders, researchers with clients should decide on whether it is important to bring in any independent specialist or academic to help ensure that the materials express the breadth of views on the issues under scrutiny fairly and to help to ensure that factual material is accurate.
  3. Researchers should confirm with clients whether there are vested interests who might be expected to have different, or extreme, views, as well as making their own efforts to find this out, and agree whether their views should be included in the materials.
  4. At the proposal stage, researchers should outline who they think is appropriate to be responsible for the compilation of, and the final approval of materials shown or presented to participants. Particular care should be taken with introductory materials which set out challenges and the roles and views of different bodies and stakeholders, as this is likely to set the tone for the whole event.
  5. Where using expert witnesses to present perspectives, researchers should take reasonable steps to ensure that individuals are well briefed and familiar with guidelines for presenting evidence in deliberative events (e.g. Sciencewise guidance).
  6. Where there is divergence of opinion between experts, researcher should explain to participants how this divergence will be handled in the consultation process, even if this cannot be done in real time and has to be communicated to the participants at a later date.
  7. Researchers should ensure that all sources are clearly identified in materials (e.g. in notes on slides), make sure moderators and facilitators know where these come from. The sources should be available to participants on request. Members of the core research team who are present on the day should be able to explain why these sources, rather than others, were chosen.



8. Researchers should take reasonable steps, e.g. through the use of stakeholders or independent specialists, or through their own research, to ensure that sources are credible and are accurately represented in the materials.

#### Reporting results and feedback

1. When reporting the results from a deliberative project, researchers should make it clear how many participants took part in the deliberative project and any selection criteria used.
2. When reporting (particularly for larger events) it is important that the report/presentation makes it clear that post-deliberation responses may not reflect/represent the views of the general public if polled.
3. As part of the deliberative process, researchers should acknowledge the contribution of participants by feeding back the conclusions of the research to them.

#### **Other Sources of Information:**

##### **INVOLVE**

Deliberative Public Engagement - Nine Principles

[http://www.involve.org.uk/nine\\_principles/](http://www.involve.org.uk/nine_principles/)

##### **Sciencewise**

Guiding Principles for Public Dialogue

<http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/publications/>



MRS  
The Old Trading House  
15 Northburgh Street  
London EC1V 0JR

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7490 4911  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 0608  
Email: [codeline@mrs.org.uk](mailto:codeline@mrs.org.uk)  
Website: [www.mrs.org.uk](http://www.mrs.org.uk)

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