

6 November 2007

Bronwyn Hegarty
Educational Development Centre
H Block
Forth Street
Otago Polytechnic

Dear Bronwyn

ETHICS 396 The power of design on flexible learning and digital network literacy

Thank you for your application.

We appreciate the intention to develop processes that encourage participants, who are colleagues as well as students, to respond freely and safely.

We have not been provided a copy of the survey to gather demographic data and investigate aspects of digital network literacy and self-efficacy. Please send us a copy. It is also not clear if these surveys are, for example, returned anonymously, completed on line, intended to be linked to the assessment data, or will be initially analysed by the researchers/course facilitators or the external interviewer researcher.

We also do not have the semi structured questions for the interviewer to use in the focus groups. These may not have yet been developed until the questionnaire is completed, but if more information is available about the intent than outlined in the participant information form (*The purpose of the focus group will be to explore aspects of your experience participating in the course and your perceptions of your own digital network literacy and self-efficacy in eLearning section*) the Committee would like to see it.

Because the assessment will have been marked by the researcher/facilitator we assume that the assessment cannot be analysed anonymously, and therefore request that you make a clear statement in the information sheets about who will analyse the assessments and whether the specific data from this will be matched to the demographic and self efficacy data. We note that no matching to the focus group transcriptions is possible or intended.

We are not clear how the focus groups will be conducted. In the absence of any statement that this is not the case we have assumed that these will be conducted in the standard way, i.e. face to face. Should the project intend to undertake the focus groups some other way, e.g. via the internet or by teleconference, we would wish to see further information about the arrangements.

We have some concern around the project asking to see participants' assessments after the event, i.e. they will not have written them with the knowledge they would be used for research. We would like it made explicit that the participants can complete the survey and join the focus group but not provide you the assessment, if that is their preference. Please amend the information sheet and consent form accordingly.

Currently the section *What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?* only provides information on how the data will be placed in to the public domain. Please be specific about any data matching that will link the demographic data and the assessments.

We are not clear who will undertake the transcription. Given the careful way you have identified a research associate will be involved in the focus groups we would like to see a similar statement about the transcriber. Please also provide a copy of the confidentiality agreement such a transcriber will be asked to sign.

We are not clear if the transcriber and/or the associate researcher will be external to the institution or merely external to the teaching team. Please clarify the independence and, for the associate researcher, the level of research expertise they will have. It may be that this is the role of the colleague academic from Massey but this is not specified.

Given the possible difficulty of getting in touch with participants after 5 years we advise you to consider the relevance of this - you may only need to keep the results, not the raw data. If this is your intention you may wish to change the wording in the consent form

You will need to change the headings on the participant information form and consent forms – currently they still use the sample wording and font.

Please consider these aspects and return to us the revised information sheet and consent forms, the survey, the confidentiality agreement, a short letter advising us how you have addressed other issues we have raised (if they are not evident in these forms) and the other information requested.

We look forward to receiving the requested information.

Yours sincerely



Chris Bain
Administrator
Research Ethics Committee

cc R Day