SCREENING QUESTIONS FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (Stage 3)

For all human participant research conducted by MQ staff or research students in Stage 3 of our recommencement roadmap (commenced 15 December), a pre-session COVID-19 risk screening by phone or email should be conducted.

This is consistent with the existing 2020 COVIDSafe Research Plan (p. 33, p. 60, pp. 65-66), which requires that potential participants receive COVIDSafe guidance and a pre-session COVID-19 risk screening before their involvement.

When to conduct the screening interview
It is preferable that this pre-session COVID-19 risk screening be conducted the day or evening before to save a wasted journey by participant or researcher. In some instances, risk screening might need to be conducted just prior to the session.

Questions

☐ Have you or anyone you have been in close contact with travelled overseas in the last 14 days?

☐ Have you been diagnosed with, or are you currently awaiting tests relating to suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis?

☐ Have you been in close contact with someone with a confirmed or suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days?

☐ Do you have, or have you had in the last 14 days a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, aches and pains, fatigue, change in sense of smell or taste, chills, body aches, diarrhoea, or headache?

If research involves people from at-risk populations, or is to be conducted at a site where vaccination is mandatory:

☐ Have you been fully vaccinated?

☐ Would you be willing to show me a copy of your vaccination certificate or valid exemption before the session?

Actions

In the event of a yes response to any of the four questions (and/or a no response to either of the last two questions if asked), the research session must be cancelled and rescheduled.

If you are conducting research involving at-risk populations, or at a site with a vaccine mandate, you should also be prepared to show the participant your vaccination certificate or exemption and confirm that you too are following COVIDSafe research practices.

You need only sight the vaccination certificate and do not need and should not retain records of certificates or any further details. The answers to the pre-session COVID-19 risk screening will offer a record of compliance with COVIDSafe practices given that only participants who have no symptoms, meet the vaccination requirement and are willing and able to show their certificate (if necessary) should progress to a session.
Ethics approval for confirming vaccination status (where necessary)
The Director of Research Ethics and Integrity gave blanket approval on 12 October 2021 for all previously approved projects to include this protocol for confirming vaccination status of adult or child participants in on or off campus research (note that vaccination is no longer required for researchers or participants, with the exception of research with vulnerable populations or at sites with vaccine mandates, in which case researchers must be fully vaccinated). There is no need to seek an amendment to ethics applications to follow this protocol.

Please also note that the Director of Research Ethics and Integrity gave blanket approval on 12 October 2021 for all previously approved human participant projects to revert back to face-to-face data collection. This only applies to projects originally approved by Human Research Ethics as face to face and amended online/virtual due to COVID restrictions. These projects can revert to the original approved mode without seeking an amendment. Projects originally approved online/virtual and seeking to test face-to-face for the first time require an amendment to the original Ethics approval.

Researchers starting new human research data collection must apply for ethics approval prior to commencement, as per business-as-usual procedures.

Vaccination status of children from at-risk populations in on-campus research
Children from at-risk populations under the age of 16 who are not yet vaccinated (or eligible for vaccination) and who attend a session on-campus in the company of a parent/guardian are permitted to participate in research: (1) with the consent of the parent/guardian and (2) if the parent/guardian and all other adults in the house 16 years and above are vaccinated (or have valid exemptions). This is in addition to vaccination of the researcher and COVIDSafe practices.

Thus, the relevant COVID-19 risk assessment questions should be:

- Have you, your child, anyone in your household or anyone you have been in close contact with travelled overseas in the last 14 days?
- Have you, your child, or anyone in your household been diagnosed with, or currently awaiting tests relating to suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis?
- Have you, your child or anyone in your household been in close contact with someone with a confirmed or suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days?
- Do you, your child or anyone in your household have, or have you had in the last 14 days a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, aches and pains, fatigue, change in sense of smell or taste, chills, body aches, diarrhoea, or headache?
- Have you, you child, and other members in your household been fully vaccinated?
- Would you be willing to show me a copy of the vaccination certificates (or valid exemptions) before the session?