

Common Mistakes in REB Applications, Letters of Introduction and Questionnaires

Below are the most common mistakes in REB Applications. The REB suggests that applicants review the following before submitting their applications for REB review

I. The REB Application

1. **The problem of lack of clarity, inadequate descriptions, and incomplete answers in REB Applications:** Applicants must ensure that they have “thought through” their methodological applications before submitting them to the REB. A clearly articulated research application is key to helping the REB understand what the applicant is trying to accomplish.

The application must also clearly explain the means of establishing contact with prospective research participants, how risk to participants will be minimized, and how research data will be gathered and protected.

Applicants should also proofread their applications for spelling and grammatical errors before they are submitted to the REB.

2. **Failure to consider how the research and questionnaire will impact the persons being interviewed:** Applications that address all risks and hardships which the research may pose to participants are more likely to succeed an REB review. Applications should also address the issue of protecting the confidentiality of participants and their personal information.
3. **Hand-written applications:** will NOT be accepted. All applications must be typed.
4. **Unsigned applications:** will NOT be accepted. A signed copy of the application must be forwarded to the REB Chair, and electronic copies of the application and accompanying materials must also be e-mailed to the REB Chair.

II. Letter of Introduction

Applicants engaging in research projects that require the consent of human subjects must provide a letter that introduces their research to prospective participants. The purpose of a letter of introduction is to ensure that participants understand the purpose of the research and that they know who is conducting the study. Each letter of introduction must include the following:

1. Title of the Study;
2. Name and Addresses of the Researchers, the Institutions where they work, as well as contact phone number and e-mail address;
3. An explanation of the procedures used in the research;
4. An explanation of the possible risks for participants in the study;
5. An explanation of the possible benefits for participants in the study;
6. A statement concerning the confidentiality of the personal information collected from participants in the study. An adequate description and assurances must also be given indicating what measures the researchers have put in place to ensure that the personal information of participants will not be improperly disclosed.
7. A statement that participation in the study is voluntary and that a participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequence to him or her.

PLEASE NOTE: In most cases, the letter of introduction will also have a **Declaration of Consent** whereby the participant declares his or her informed and voluntary consent to participating in the study. The participant does this by signing his or her name below a statement to that effect, and writes the date on which the consent was given.

A Letter of Introduction that properly addresses all of the above issues is necessary for a successful REB Application.

III. The Questionnaire

1. Research Questionnaire for Participants must be comprehensible. If the REB cannot understand your questionnaire, it likely will not be approved by the REB.
2. Any questionnaire that asks participants to disclose personal information that is not relevant to the study will not be approved.

Important Note: If the REB requires an Applicant to revise and re-submit his or her application before he or she can commence research, the REB will require at least one month to review the revised application. It is therefore important for Applicants to submit their applications -- and when necessary, revised applications -- to the REB well in advance of when they plan to commence their research. See the REB webpage for other deadline considerations.