Checklist for Students Completing a Student Protocol for IRB Review

Instructions: Before beginning a protocol submission in Mentor, please review each of these questions and reflect on your own protocol submission. Discuss each point with your Faculty Advisor and ensure you have the appropriate information included in your protocol submission.

1. Have you completed all the necessary training for human subjects research? Check the Office of Sponsored Research Website for more information on required trainings through CITI.
2. Have you completed a thorough literature review and included citations in your protocol writeup? Make sure that the literature supports the aims of your study. At the same time, check to see if this exact study has been completed in the past. Ensure your originality and connection to wider debates. Your literature review should include previous research that studies the same (or similar) questions and hypotheses. State how your proposed study differs from previous studies.
3. Clearly state your research question and study aims. Aims should be clearly stated in your protocol submission and easy to find. What hypotheses does your study investigate? How do your hypotheses support your research question and aims?
4. Clearly state what type of data collection interactions you are planning to use in your research: casual/anonymous (observation-interaction); interviews (expert, political/official, historical data); lab settings (experiments, surveys); personal data with or without risk; focus group discussions. Make sure your questions are consistent across types of data collection methods.
5. Do all the questions asked in your surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc. directly relate to your aims? If there are questions that do not relate to the aims, can you alter them or remove them? Do any questions reinforce stereotypes or triggering/painful associations?
6. How will you record your data: notes by hand; audio recording (why is this necessary?; video recording (why is this necessary?). The level of risk associated with your research increases with added recording (no recording/least amount of risk → audio/medium risk → video/most risk).
7. Clearly state the benefits and risks for participants in your study. Make sure the benefits outweigh the risks. If it is easier to do so, list both the benefits and the risks to weigh them against each other. This can be included in your protocol and used as a tool to weigh the benefits/risks. Why have you chosen these approaches? How extensive will your work be in each of these research methods (number of interviews, length of interviews, etc.)?
8. Are you focusing on one specific target group (gender, ethnic, racial, age, etc.)? How do you define this target group? Do you clearly state and justify why this group is targeted and what the implication of such singling out of a population may be? Is there a clear indication that targeting this group is necessary? Are you comparing different groups of people or only looking at one group of people? If you are not comparing, explain why. For example, are you only researching BIPOC students and not comparing their experiences to other groups? The researcher should think through the potential harm that could be introduced (i.e., stigmatization, scapegoating, inability to identify cause/effect of a minority group without addressing a larger issue, etc.) if no comparative group is used and include this information in the protocol submission.

9. Do you identify as part of the group you are studying? Please think through how membership in this group influences you as a researcher and how this may influence the potential outcomes of the research. Address any potential bias in your protocol.
10. Does the consent form provide a clear explanation of the study protocol? Consent forms should be written at or below an 8th grade reading level. The Flesch-Kincaid readability score provides a good assessment of readability. Your consent form should be more than 50 - the higher the score, the easier your document is to read. Follow these instructions to determine the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of your consent form: Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test.
11. How will you store your data while you are collecting it? Ensure your data is stored in a safe location (physical copies and online data use). After you have completed your study, how will you destroy your data so it is no longer in use? This means deleting data files, consent forms, and other forms with any identifying information in the physical form (journals, written data collection) and online. Check the Policies and Procedures page on the Office of Sponsored Research website to check Data Security Guidelines.