

## EASHW TIPS – DECEPTION IN RESEARCH

*You don't have to reveal everything from the start, but one day you have to inform all participants correctly and completely about the exact purpose of your study.*

### 13. DECEPTION: ARE YOU MISLEADING THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE START OF THE STUDY?

Full information and voluntary consent are basic principles of research ethics. Each study has the duty to inform the participants clearly and fully at some point about the exact objectives of the study and any subsequent intentions to (re)use the collected data.

- Sometimes you cannot **disclose the exact purpose of the study at the start of the study**, because this could steer the behavior of the participants in a certain direction. Then we advise you to clearly explain the exact purpose of the study at the end of the study by **drawing up** a debriefing.
- You can therefore give the participants the opportunity to withdraw from the study (if this is still possible). For example, with an online survey you can debrief at the end and give participants the option "click here if after reading this information you still do not want your data to be used for this research".
- Another form of deception is the use of **false and/or fictitious information** that you will use in your research. For example, you make up a number of statements about famous people, or you tell participants of a study that they took a test error (even though it was correct). This is also possible, but only if you inform everyone correctly afterwards about which information was true / not true.

### DEBRIEFING

The debriefing certainly includes:

- Name and contact details of the responsible researcher
- The exact purpose of the study, and
- An explanation of the deception: how were participants deceived? And why was this necessary?

An example of a debriefing statement when not communicating the exact purpose of the study at the start:

Thank you very much for your participation. The purpose of this study is to study how *[set the exact objective here]*. At the start of the study, we did not communicate this exact goal *[describe and explain the deception by indicating what the participants were told to believe and state the reasons for the deception]*.

*[optional]:*

After reading this information, do you not want the data we have collected about you to be used for these purposes? CLICK / CHECK next box. [OPTION BOX].

Please contact *[researcher's name]* at the following email address *[investigator email address]* if you have any questions about this study.

*[optional]:*

Please keep the exact purpose of this study secret by not telling potential participants about it. It is also important for them that they do not know the exact purpose of the study at the start of their

participation. The study will end on [DATE], after which you can of course talk about the exact purpose of this study with other participants.

An example of a debriefing statement when using incorrect/fictitious information in the study:

Thank you very much for your participation. The purpose of this study is to study how *[set the exact objective here]*. During the study you received information from us that was not true / fictitious. We would like to inform you of this [explain what was not true/fictitious and why].

*[optional]:*

After reading this information, do you not want the data we have collected about you to be used for these purposes? CLICK / CHECK next box. [OPTION BOX].

Please contact *[researcher's name]* at the following email address *[investigator email address]* if you have any questions about this study.

*[optional]:*

Please do not tell this information further to potential participants. The study ends on [DATE], afterwards you can of course talk about all aspects of this study with other participants.