

The use of group/block emails to recruit participants

Taking part in research and knowledge exchange activities is arguably part of the wider university experience, but the potential for problems exists if using group/block emails within the University system as a method of recruiting participants. The use of group/block emails to send unsolicited requests for recruitment to research projects (e.g., completion of online questionnaires, attendance at briefing events etc.) is generally not permitted across Higher Education institutions due to the potential breach of research ethics guidelines, the risk of inducing “survey fatigue”, and/or the possibility for nuisance if frequent requests are made. Accordingly, LTU students and staff may not use group/block internal email for participant recruitment nor should they agree to send on requests from external organisations/individuals to any internal group/block email lists that external parties may not have access to.

However, to balance the ability to recruit research participants from the student and staff population at LTU while ensuring appropriate use of university systems, the following guidance has been approved by the University Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee:

For internally approved studies

Any recruitment-related text should be posted to common portals (outlined below) whereby the details of the projects are shared after they have been approved according to School/Institute processes. The exact wording for such posts must have been included in the original ethics application appraised by the committees or supervisory team members for UG and staff/PG projects, respectively. Accordingly, ethical approval applications must include a statement to indicate that the use of the common portals will feature in the recruitment methods. Retrospective use of such methods that were not envisaged in the original application must be notified via the ethics amendment process and thus be reviewed accordingly as this constitutes more than a minor amendment. In the specifics of the recruitment text that is shared, applications must ensure that as a minimum, there is mention that the study has received full ethical approval (in the case of staff and/or PG projects this includes the name of the relevant committee and ethical approval number), and the date by which participant recruitment is open until. The common portals available for staff to post to are...

- Post a myLTU news item (instructions available via the link: <https://leedstrinity.sharepoint.com/myLTU/SitePages/myLTU-News.aspx>)

- Post a news item on the intranet
- Post details in the postgraduate research newsletter
- For support with large/high profile research projects, consider contacting the Student Communications Manager (Danny Roberts; d.roberts@leedstrinity.ac.uk), and/or the Corporate Communications (Sarah DeSalis; s.desalis@leedstrinity.ac.uk) Manager for support whereby requests for inclusion in the “Leeds Trinity News & Events” communications will be appraised on a case-by-case basis.

For externally approved studies

In some cases, university staff are contacted by external contacts who are seeking to recruit from LTU's staff and student population. Such requests should not be disseminated more widely using any means other than those shared portals listed above. As a minimum, such posts would need to include a statement to indicate that the study has been ethically approved and the external resources to allow follow-up (e.g., a link to an information source or QR code).

Good practice

The ‘all-staff’ and ‘all-students’ mailing lists maintained by the University cannot be used to distribute participant recruitment materials. Similarly, the ‘Staff Departmental Groups’ and ‘Student Departmental Groups’ on the global address list (or similar) **should not** be used. This is the case for both student and staff projects. Likewise, email distribution lists maintained by Departments and Schools/Institutes may not be used to recruit participants; this includes the virtual mailing lists and email facilities in Moodle, which allow contact with specific groups of students, and are accessible to academic and administrative staff.

For any queries please address these to your Faculty/Institute Research Ethics & Integrity Committee.