**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

**Review Letter**

Date: January 25, 2024

To: Aayush Shrestha (Joseph Malloch), Computer Science

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed the following submission for research involving human participants:

REB file #: 2023-6992

Title: Haptics and spatial-audio based navigational approach in VR for the visually impaired

The Board has found the project requires revisions and/or clarifications. When you have responded to this review, one electronic copy of the revised documents of your project must be resubmitted to Research Ethics at [ethics@dal.ca](mailto:ethics@dal.ca) in a single electronic file in MS Word or PDF format.

Your resubmission must include the following:

1. A cover letter that includes the recommended revisions/clarifications from this review letter and your responses to them. Each of the Board’s comments should be immediately followed by a precise indication of how it has been addressed, including reference to the corresponding sections and page numbers in the submission; and,
2. The revised version of the submission itself, with each change highlighted for easy identification.

Upon receipt, your revised submission will be reviewed again. You may not begin your research until you receive an approval letter from the Research Ethics Board. Board meeting deadlines do not apply to the review of these revisions. You may submit them as soon as they are complete. There are no reviews in August. If no re-submission or communication has been received by our office within 90 days, the review will expire and a new submission will be required should you wish to pursue the study.

If you have any questions, or require clarification, please **contact Research Ethics** at 902-494-3423 or by email at [ethics@dal.ca](mailto:ethics@dal.ca).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Revisions and/or clarifications are requested.

LAY SUMMARY

2.1.1 It says in the text that this is a pilot study, but the box for ‘fully developed study’ is checked. Please clarify.

2.3 RECRUITMENT

2.3.1 Please justify why participants who are pregnant or elderly are excluded. If there are concerns with physical mobility issues, for example, then it should be those specific issues that result in exclusion, not a particular state of being. Additionally, what does it mean to be ‘elderly’? This term is open to individual interpretation.

2.4 INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

2.4.2 Why would the data not be able to be removed after they complete the study? Feasibly, the data could be removed before it is included in the analysis.

2.5 METHODS AND ANALYSIS

2.5.1 C) The questionnaire information is unclear. How many questionnaires with the participants be asked to complete?

2.5.3 Specify the pro-rating schedule and include this information here and in the consent form.

2.6 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

2.6.1 B) Please specify the level of identifiability of the study data, as requested. Review the link to the TCPS2 for information about identifiability.

Point 4: Please provide specific information about the secure storage of video data. Where precisely will it be held?

2.6.1 D) Will there be a key-code? If so, explain how it will be kept securely, yet separate from the data.

How will data be shared/transferred between team members?

Where will the paper consent forms be stored?

2.6.2 Please specify the length of time data will be stored. When will data be eventually destroyed?

Please clarify why videos are being kept. The application reads as though only the interviews are recorded, but after transcription why will videos need to be kept?

APPENDICES

RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

Not all exclusions are listed. Careful revision is needed to align with study inclusion/exclusion criteria as listed in the application form.

CONSENT FORM

~~State that Dr. Malloch is also the supervisor.~~

~~Please include a phone number for someone on the research team~~.

Please revise the consent form to remove jargon and explain the study purpose in lay language. The REB suggests consent forms be written at a grade 8 level at most.

Ensure the full list of eligibility criteria is included.

Under what you will be asked to do, it seems as if participants do the study tasks and are then asked to consent to participate (“you continue the experiment, you will be given a consent form to read and sign”). Revise for clarity, as participants need to consent before participating.

Include the pro-rated payment schedule.

It is confusing to say both of the following: “Electronic records will be password-protected and securely stored on an encrypted external hard drive, kept in a locked filing cabinet within the researcher's office.” And “The anonymous data collected in this study will be stored temporarily on Microsoft OneDrive and then moved to a private SharePoint list, the institutional cloud storage platform of Dalhousie University.” Please provide clarity around where the data will be stored. (Further, where will non-anonymous data be stored?)

The “stop participating” section reads as if the study is only a survey; please revise.

The information provided in this same section about removing data from the study does not match what is in the application and speaks only to the survey component. Please revise.

The consent form lacks an actual consent statement. Please include an express statement of consent for participants to sign. In this format it is simply a signature element at the end of an information sheet.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

There are three questionnaires included as appendices, but it is not clear when each will be used. Please clarify in section 2.5.1.