National College of Ireland

**Ethical Guidelines and Procedures for Research involving Human Participants**

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October 2018

ETHICS FORM FOR SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

**Ethics Application Checklist**

To be submitted alongside the ethics application.

Please complete the below checklist, ticking each item to confirm that it has been addressed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. I agree to obtain informed written consent from all human participants aged over 18 who are involved in this research (or if circulating digitally, I will ensure that informed consent is completed, and will have the participants indicate their informed consent by continuing with their study engagement). 2. I agree to obtain informed written consent from the parents of anyone aged under 18 in this research (or from the schools if appropriate), and informed written assent from those under 18 in this research. 3. I include a letter of agreement from a clinically responsible individual agreeing to (where appropriate) help me recruit/provide clinical support in the event that participants become distressed/host the study data collection. 4. I append a letter of agreement from an external institution or organisation agreeing to host the study. 5. I agree to comply with NCI’s Data Retention Policy. 6. I have appended a) information sheet, b) consent form/assent form, c) debriefing sheet. 7. I have provided details of how non-anonymised data will be stored, in a safe and encrypted manner. 8. I have included my contact details and those of my supervisor (where appropriate). I have only included my NCI email address and not included any personal contact information. 9. I have given sufficient details on the proposed study design, methodology, and data collection procedures, to allow a full ethical review, and I understand that my failure to give sufficient detail may result in a resubmission being required. 10. I understand that if I make changes to my study following ethical approval, it is my responsibility to seek an ethics amendment if the change merits ethical consideration. | □Yes  □Yes  Yes  Yes  □Yes  Yes  Yes  □Yes  Yes  □Yes |

**National College of Ireland**

**Human Participants Ethical Review Application Form**

Part A: Flexi Utilities Utilitiesddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddddd and Contact Information

**Name**

**Student Number (if applicable)**

X15732075

**Email**

[X15732075@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:X15732075@student.ncirl.ie)

**Status:**

Undergraduate □ X

Postgraduate □

Staff □

**Supervisor (if applicable)**

Mr Ron Elliot

**Title of Research Project**

Utility App: Utility Pay As You Go customers’ automated top up service

**Category into which the proposed research falls (see guidelines)**

**Research Category A** □

Research Category B □

Research Category C □X

**Have you read the NCI Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants?**

Yes □ X

No □

**Please indicate any other ethical guidelines or codes of conduct you have consulted**

N/A

**Has this research been submitted to any other research ethics committee?**

Yes □

No □ X

**If yes please provide details, and the outcomes of this process, if applicable:**

N/A

**Is this research supported by any form of research funding?**

Yes □

No □ X

If yes please provide details, and indicate whether any restrictions exist on the freedom of the researcher to publish the results:

N/A

Part B: Research Proposal

Briefly outline the following information (not more than 200 words in any section).

**Proposed starting date and duration of project**

October 2018 – May 2019

**The rationale for the project**

Utility App is a service that will serve as a bridge between pay as you go (PAYG) customers & utility providers mainly Gas & Electricity. This service will provide customers with the comfort of topping up their Gas or Electricity meters from the comfort of their homes or on the Go regardless of where they are or even do that on behalf of their loved ones. This will also have an electronic wallet for saving up some of their top up for later usage.

**The research aims and objectives**

Utility App’s research

Utility App’s research will focus on pay as you go customers’ currently experiencing more than necessary transactions just to have Gas or electricity available in their meters. This service aims to eliminate that. There is a gap in the market for this service which will avail automated top up credit into their accounts upon a top up transaction. This will also allow them use of electronic wallet top up saving for later usage.

The objective is to prepare requirement specification document that will be used in the development of this service.

**The research design**

Include my research findings

The research will involve human participants ( over 18 years old) that will provide feedback regrading the the possibility of using the service in question.

Participants permission for data gathered in this project to be used for research purpose is obtain.

The feedback will be collected through an online survey and face to face interviews. The survey and interviews are anonymised and therefore no personal data is collected.

The collected feedback will be analysed and used to improve the application. An overall description of the answers received in the survey and interviews will be presented in a report.

**The research sample and sample size**

**Please indicate the sample size and your justification of this sample size. Describe the age range of participants, and whether they belong to medical groups (those currently receiving medical treatment, those not in remission from previous medical treatment, those recruited because of a previous medical condition, healthy controls recruited for a medical study) or clinical groups (those undergoing non-medical treatment such as counselling, psychoanalysis, in treatment centres, rehabilitation centres, or similar, or those with a DSM disorder diagnosis).**

A target of 100 participants that use the pre-payed utilities will be invited to voluntarily partake in the surveys and interviews.

Social media (e.g. Facebook) and email will be used to invite them. The participants will partake on a voluntary basis.

**If the study involves a MEDICAL or CLINICAL group, the following details are required:**

1. **Do you have approval from a hospital/medical/specialist ethics committee?**

**If YES, please append the letter of approval. Also required is a letter from a clinically responsible authority at the host institution, supporting the study, detailing the support mechanisms in place for individuals who may become distressed as a result of participating in the study, and the potential risk to participants.**

**If NO, please detail why this approval cannot or has not been saught.**

1. **Does the study impact on participant’s medical condition, wellbeing, or health?   
   If YES, please append a letter of approval from a specialist ethics committee.**

**If NO, please give a detailed explanation about why you do not expect there to be an impact on medical condition, wellbeing, or health.**

**The nature of any proposed pilot study. Pilot studies are usually required if a) a new intervention is being used, b) a new questionnaire, scale or item is being used, or c) established interventions or questionnaires, scales or items are being used on a new population. If no such study is planned, explain why it is not necessary.**

N/A

**The methods of data analysis. Give details here of the analytic process (e.g. the statistical procedures planned if quantitative, and the approach taken if qualitative. It is not sufficient to name the software to be used).**

The survey consists of yes/no questions and likert scale questions. Quantitative data will be collected via the survey and interviews analysed.

Reporting of results is done after data is aggregated across all participants.

No data or quotes will be attributed to any individual participant.

Microsoft Excel will be used for statistical analysis and graphical represention of the results.

**Study Procedure**

**Please give as detailed an account as possible of a participant’s likely experience in engaging with the study, from point of first learning about the study, to study completion. State how long project participation is likely to take, and whether participants will be offered breaks. Please attach all questionnaires, interview schedules, scales, surveys, and demographic questions, etc. in the Appendix.**

A brief description of the purpose of the study is provided to the participants at the beginning of the study. Their consent to take part in the study is requested and collected.

Once the tasks are completed, they are asked to answer the survey.

It is envisaged that the entire evaluation process of the application will not take more than 20 minutes.

Part C: Ethical Risk

**Please identify any ethical issues or risks of harm or distress which may arise during the proposed research, and how you will address this risk. Here you need to consider the potential for physical risk, social risk (i.e. loss of social status, privacy, or reputation), outside of that expected in everyday life, and whether the participant is likely to feel distress as a result of taking part in the study. Debriefing sheets must be included in the appendix if required.** These should detail the participant’s right to withdraw from the study, the statutory limits upon confidentiality, and the obligations of the researcher in relation to Freedom of Information legislation. Debriefing sheets should also include details of helplines and avenues for receiving support in the event that participants become distressed as a result of their involvement in this study.

It is not envisaged that there is any risk of harm or distress to participants.

Participants are allowed to withdraw from this study anytime if they wish to do so and this will be clearly stated on the consent form so they will be fully aware of that.

**Do the participants belong to any of the following vulnerable groups?**

(Please tick all those involved).

□ Children;

□ The older old (85+)

□ People with an intellectual or learning disability

□ Individuals or groups receiving help through the voluntary sector

□ Those in a subordinate position to the researchers such as employees

□ Other groups who might not understand the research and consent process

□ Other vulnerable groups

**How will the research participants in this study be selected, approached and recruited? From where will participants be recruited? If recruiting via an institution or organisation other than NCI please attach a letter of agreement from the host institution agreeing to host the study and circulate recruitment advertisements/email etc.**

Social media, email and face to face interviews will be used to invite people to take part in this study.

**What inclusion or exclusion criteria will be used?**

Participants must be at least 18 and less than 80 years old with no kind of vulnerability and fully aware of what they are engaging in. The study procedure will reserve the right to allow any participant that unsure, appear to be under the influence of any substance or any person who may

**How will participants be informed of the nature of the study and participation?**

An invitation email or a text sent via the social media (e.g. Facebook) describing the study purpose and procedure will be sent to the invited participants.

**Does the study involve deception or the withholding of information? If so, provide justification for this decision.**

N/A

**What procedures will be used to document the participants’ consent to participate?**

The online survey will include a question requesting the consent to take part in the study.

**Can study participants withdraw at any time without penalty? If so, how will this be communicated to participants?**

Yes. This will be communicated in the invitation email/text and verbally

**If vulnerable groups are participating, what special arrangements will be made to deal with issues of informed consent/assent?**

N/A

*Please include copies of any information letters, debriefing sheets, and consent forms with the application.*

Part D: Confidentiality and Data Protection

**Please indicate the form in which the data will be collected.**

□ Identified □Potentially Identifiable **X** □ **De-Identified**

**What arrangements are in place to ensure that the identity of participants is protected?**

No personal data will be collected in the survey or interviews but the findings will be stored safely

**Will any information about illegal behaviours be collected as part of the research process? If so, detail your consideration of how this information will be treated.**

No such information will be collected.

**Please indicate any recording devices being used to collect data (e.g. audio/video).**

No recording devices are used just documentation by pen and paper or email correspondence.

**Please describe the procedures for securing specific permission for the use of these recording devices in advance.**

N/A

**Please indicate the form in which the data will be stored.**

□ Identified □ Potentially Identifiable X□ **De-Identified**

**Who will have responsibility for the data generated by the research?**

The applicant for the Ethics approval.

Is there a possibility that the data will be archived for secondary data analysis? If so, has this been included in the informed consent process? Also include information on how and where the data will be stored for secondary analytic purposes.

No.

If not to be stored for secondary data analysis, will the data be stored for 5 years and then destroyed, in accordance with NCI policy?

**X** □ Yes □ No

**Dissemination and Reporting**

**Please describe how the participants will be informed of dissemination and reporting (e.g. submission for examination, reporting, publications, presentations)?**

The participants will not be informed about the project report.

**If any dissemination entails the use of audio, video and/or photographic records (including direct quotes), please describe how participants will be informed of this in advance.**

N/A

Part E: Signed Declaration

I confirm that I have read the NCI Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participant, and agree to abide by them in conducting this research. I also confirm that the information provided on this form is correct (Electronic signature is acceptable).

**Signature of Applicant: Adelaide Ntuli**

**Date \_\_18/10/2018\_\_\_\_**

**Signature of Supervisor (where appropriate): Ron Elliot**

**Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 18 / 10 /2018**

**Any other information the committee should be aware of?**

N/A

**APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**Survey Sample Questions**

Q1. What is your age?

18 - 30

31 - 40

41 - 50

51 - 59

60 -80

Q2. What is your Gender

Male

Female

Other

Cannot Say

|  |
| --- |
| Enter what best describes you if you wish |

Q3. What is your current status?

Student

Unemployed

Jobseeker

Employed

Retired

Q4. Are you the bill payer in your house hold?

Yes

No

Q5. Who is your current service provider for your Electricity?

Electric Ireland

PrePay Power.ie

Energia

SSE Airtricity

Bord Gás

Gas Network Ireland

Ervia

Calor Gas Ireland

FloGas

Calor Gas

Panda Power

BEenergy

PINERGY

Just Energy

Other (Please state)

Q6. Who is your current service provider for your Gas?

Electric Ireland

PrePay Power.ie

Energia

SSE Airtricity

Bord Gás

Gas Network Ireland

Ervia

Calor Gas Ireland

FloGas

Calor Gas

Panda Power

BEenergy

PINERGY

Just Energy

Other (Please state)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Q7. Would you or the household billpayer use such an App?

5. Strongly Agree

4. Agree

3. Not Sure

2. Disagree

1. Strongly Disagree

Q8. Are there any skilled internet or App users is your household?

5. All of us

4. Most of us

3. Some of us

2. Very few of us

1. None of us

Q9. Is your household currently on pay as you go system PAYG for any of your utilities?

Yes

No

Q10. Considering the reason for the survey if you answered No on previous question would you consider using PAYG if there was such an App in the market?

5. Strongly Agree

4. Agree

3. Not Sure

2. Disagree

1. Strongly Disagree

Q11. How do you currently pay for your utilities?

Monthly bill paid direct debit

Monthly bill paid in cash

Pay as you go App

PayZone shops

Q12. Do you find it convenient to use PayZone or other available ways to pay for your utilities for those who use that as a payment method?

5. Strongly Agree

4. Agree

3. Not Sure

2. Disagree

1. Strongly Disagree

Q13.

For those that already use pay as you go utilities how often have you lost your receipt before crediting your account?

5. Very likely

4. Likely

3. Not using PAYG

2. Less likely

1. Not likely

Q14. Is there internet use in your household should you consider using this app as internet connection is needed?

Yes

No

Q15. Are there any challenges you face using the current top-up system and if so how often?

5. Very often

4. Often

3. Moderate

2. Less often

1. Never

Q16. Do you have any elderly loved ones that you would find this application useful on their behalf?

5. Very likely

4. Likely

3. Not sure

2. Less likely

1. Not likely

Q17. How likely are you to recommend this app to a friend should it be developed?

5. Very likely

4. Likely

3. Not sure

2. Less likely

1. Not likely

Q18. For those already on PAYG how often do you need to top-up?

5. Very often

4. Often

3. Moderate

2. Less often

1. Never

Q19. What else would you suggest the app provides that would suit your needs better?

Answer:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Q20. What is the monthly cost of your Gas or Electricity please specify your expense on each.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Interview Questions Sample**

**APPENDIX B – CONSENT REQUEST**

|  |
| --- |
| **Consent Request Form** |
| To the readers, this is purely on voluntary basis for willing participants. I kindly invite you to help me with a project I am working on this will only take a couple minutes of your time 10 minutes at most. Information of this survey will be stored safely in a college storage and personal details will not be stored unless one expresses that they would like their details obtained and kept.  This is specifically designed for study purposes only not marketing purposes, should at any stage this become a commercial project all participants will be informed, their responses will only be used as a part of this with their full consent. The reason for this survey is stated below read it carefully and kindly respond to the best of your knowledge, interest and ability thank you in advance for your participation.  You were randomly selected as part of the survey. Questions will be either a YES or No, Scale of 1 to 5 or pick the answer that best describes your circumstances. Should at any stage want to stop participating in the survey or interview questions you have the right to stop.  Do you Agree to participate on your free will? YES or NO? |