**Research Ethics Approval Form:**

All students conducting research activity that involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants are required to gain ethical approval before commencing their research. Please answer all relevant questions and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

For further support and guidance please see your respective Unit Tutor.

**Before completing this form, we advise that you discuss your proposed research fully with your Unit Tutor. Please complete this form in good time before your research project is due to commence.**

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| **Section One: Basic details** |
| Project title: **Understanding the Causes of Data Breaches Across Industries: Strategies to Mitigate and Prevent Future Incidents**  Student name: Issam Awamleh  Student number: 21110241  Programme: Computer research project  School: computer and informatics  Intended research start date: 3/11/2024  Intended research end date: 18/1/2025 |
| **Section Two: Project summary** |
| Please select all research methods that you plan to use as part of your project:  • Interviews  • Questionnaires  • Observations  • Use of personal records  • Data analysis  • Action research  • Focus groups  • Other (please specify): ....................................................................................  ………………………………………………………………………………………….. |
| **Section Three: Participants** |
| Please answer the following questions, giving full details where necessary.  Will your research involve human participants?  Yes, the research will involve human participants.  Who are the participants? Tick all that apply:  Children aged 12–16: □  Young people aged 17–18: □  Adults: □  **How will participants be recruited (identified and approached)?**  Participants will be recruited through online platforms and professional networks related to cybersecurity. Invitations to participate in the survey or interviews will be sent to professionals working in various industries. Social media platforms like LinkedIn and forums specific to cybersecurity will also be utilized to reach a wider audience.  **Describe the processes you will use to inform participants about what you are doing:**  Participants will receive a detailed information sheet before taking part in the research. This document will outline the purpose of the research, its objectives, and how their data will be used. It will include information about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, as well as any risks or benefits of participation. Participants will also be informed about how their input will contribute to understanding and addressing data breaches in their respective industries.  **How will you obtain consent from participants? Will this be written? How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any time?**  Consent will be obtained through a written digital form. Participants will be required to read the information sheet and electronically sign a consent form before proceeding. The consent form will clearly state that participants can withdraw from the study at any point without any obligation to provide a reason. Instructions on how to withdraw (e.g., emailing the researcher or leaving the survey) will be prominently included. For interviews, verbal consent will also be recorded at the beginning. Participants will be reminded that their participation is voluntary, and they may choose to withdraw at any stage.  **Studies involving questionnaires:**  Will participants be given the option of omitting questions they do not wishto answer?  Yes: □ No: □  If No, please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this:  Participants will have the freedom to omit any question they do not wish to answer. This approach respects their autonomy and ensures that their participation is entirely voluntary and comfortable. By allowing this option, we address ethical concerns about coercion or discomfort, ensuring participants feel in control of their input. Furthermore, the survey will be designed to emphasize that no penalties or judgments will result from skipping any question.  **Studies involving observation:**  Confirm whether participants will be asked for their informed consent to be observed.  Yes: □  No: □  Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)?  Yes: □ No: □  Will participants be given information about the findings of your study? (This could be a brief summary of your findings in general.)  Yes: □ No: □ |
| **Section Four: Data storage and security** |
| Confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998):  Yes: □  No: □  Who will have access to the data and personal information?  Only the principal researcher and authorized members of the research team will have access to the data and personal information.  **During the research:**  Where will the data be stored?  The data will be securely stored on a Laptop using cloud.  Will mobile devices (such as USB storage and laptops) be used?  Yes: □  No: □  If yes, please provide further details:  **After the research:**  **Where will the data be stored?**  The data will be securely stored on a Laptop using cloud.  **How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?**  **It will be kept for this semester and the data will be saved as CSV file format**  Will data be kept for use by other researchers?  Yes: □  No: □  *If yes, please provide further details:* |
| **Section Five: Ethical issues** |
| Are there any particular features of your proposed work which may raise ethical concerns? If so, please outline how you will deal with these:  It is important that you demonstrate your awareness of potential risks that may arise as a result of your research. Please consider/address all issues that may apply. Ethical concerns may include, but are not limited to the following:   * Informed consent.   **Ethical Concern**: Participants may not even realize what they’re a part of.  **Mitigation**: It will be made clear and detailed information provided on a study’s purpose, procedures, possible risks, and benefits. It will also read explicitly that participation is voluntary, and withdrawing at any time is possible.   * Potentially vulnerable participants.   **Ethical Concern**: Some participants might feel forced or unable to voice discomfort.  **Mitigation**: By making participants assured their right to decline, without consequences. This will also help recruiting to be inclusive and sensitive to vulnerable groups and not be too pressures.   * Sensitive topics.   **Ethical Concern**: Questions may cause emotional distress or discomfort.  **Mitigation**: If there is a question that a participant does not want to answer, they will be told that is okay. Sensitive topics will be supported with resources.   * Risks to participants and/or researchers.   **Ethical Concern:** One or the other — either psychological discomfort the participant or safety concerns for the researcher — can develop.  **Mitigation**: General surveys about data breaches will be non-invasive. They will not interact directly with researched environments, and security will be applied properly.   * Confidentiality/anonymity.   **Ethical Concern**: Participant privacy breach.  **Mitigation**: The data will be anonymized, stored securely on encrypted devices. No identifiable information will be published in findings.   * Disclosures/limits to confidentiality.   **Ethical Concern**: Participants may choose to reveal sensitive, illegal activities.  **Mitigation**: Participants will be told of confidentiality limits (e.g. legal obligations to report certain disclosures).   * Data storage and security, both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection).   **Ethical Concern**: Unauthorized data access or loss likely.  **Mitigation**: It will also be stored on servers that have been encrypted by the university and with restricted access. However, if used, mobile devices shall be encrypted and protected with a password. The university will then delete or archive the data securely based on our research policy.   * Reporting.   **Ethical Concern**: Failure to represent findings or breach of trust with participants.  **Mitigation**: It will report accurately, without identifiable references to participants, and will be transparent.   * Dissemination and use of your findings.   **Ethical Concern**: Findings may be misused or misinterpreted.  **Mitigation**: Reports will include clear explanation of findings. Findings will be explained to participants how they will be communicated (reports, academic journals) and they will be assured anonymity in all outputs. |
| **Section Six: Declaration** |
| I have read, understood and will abide by *[HTU]* Research Ethics Policy:  Yes: □  No: □  I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my Unit Tutor:  Yes: □  No: □  **I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:**  The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of my research.  Name: Issam Awamleh  Date: 18/1/2025  **Please submit your completed form to:** Safaa hriez |