

## QUICK OPERATIONAL GUIDE

**Preventing Inauthentic Participation in Research***Two-page reference tool for online or remote studies*

Purpose. Prevent, detect and manage suspicious participation in a proportionate, fair and compliant manner.

This quick guide supplements the full guide v3.0 and does not replace the approved protocol or the principal investigator's judgment.

**CORE PRINCIPLE**

A signal is an indicator to examine, not proof. No automated filter, AI detector, response time, VPN, IP address or atypical profile should alone determine exclusion, non-payment or deletion.

**1. Before launch**

- Assess risk based on recruitment, the population, link visibility and compensation.
- Define prevention measures, review criteria and exclusion criteria before data collection.
- Plan proportionate and accessible prescreening without collecting more information than necessary.
- Describe checks, metadata, limits to anonymity and compensation arrangements in the consent materials.
- Check available institutional platform features with IT.

**2. During data collection**

| Possible signal                                 | Prudent response                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Sudden increase in volume                       | Check the recruitment channel and timeline.             |
| Very short duration or regular response pattern | Compare with the pilot test or observed distribution.   |
| Repetitive, generic or off-topic text           | Consider language, literacy, accessibility and context. |
| IP address, VPN, proxy or shared device         | Treat as a non-decisive technical signal.               |
| Unexpected pattern of responses                 | Validate without stereotypes or profiling.              |
| Failure on an attention check                   | Do not draw a conclusion from one isolated failure.     |

**3. If a participation appears suspicious**

- Preserve raw data and relevant logs.
- Place the data in logical quarantine without irreversible deletion.
- Apply preapproved criteria and look for multiple converging indicators.
- Obtain a second review when the case remains ambiguous.
- Record the evidence reviewed, decision, rationale and date.

## 4. Compensation and data handling

The compensation decision is separate from the decision about using the data. Analytical exclusion therefore does not automatically mean withholding compensation.

| Situation                               | Approach                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unresolved doubt                        | Preserve and document; favor the planned payment so a legitimate participant is not disadvantaged. |
| Withdrawal or partial participation     | Apply the approved and communicated terms.                                                         |
| Inauthenticity sufficiently established | Apply only objective, proportionate, preapproved and documented criteria.                          |

## 5. Privacy and metadata

- Justify each metadata element by a necessary purpose.
- Inform participants of the categories collected and limits to anonymity.
- Limit the linkage between metadata and responses, access and retention periods.
- Plan for destruction or de-identification and prohibit unapproved secondary use.

## 6. When to consult the ORE or REB

| ORE                                                                                                                                                                                      | REB                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguous situation;</li> <li>• need for guidance;</li> <li>• choice of an institutional pathway;</li> <li>• administrative support.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased risk to participants;</li> <li>• privacy or confidentiality breach;</li> <li>• significant deviation;</li> <li>• substantial amendment.</li> </ul> |

## 7. Decision flow

| Step                                      | Direction                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Signal detected                        | Preserve the data and record the observations.                                                                      |
| 2. Ethical risk or significant deviation? | YES: take protective measures and use the institutional reporting pathway to the REB.<br>NO: continue the analysis. |
| 3. Substantial change needed?             | YES: submit an amendment to the REB before implementation.<br>NO: document scientific management.                   |
| 4. In all cases                           | Decide separately on data handling, compensation and obligations to the REB.                                        |

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Suspicious participation is not automatically fraud. Inauthentic participation is not automatically an event reportable to the REB. Decisions must be proportionate, documented and based on multiple converging factors.