

Project Design Questionnaire

for Social Media Research Projects
Version 1

This Project Design Questionnaire engages researchers in the early formulation of project design by stressing ethical considerations and best practices for Research Data Management (RDM). As you move further in your project design, a more formal assessment of your project's RDM needs will involve drafting a [Research Data Management Plan](#).

The questions below support the integration of ethical considerations and RDM best practices into the project design.

Formulate the scope of the project

- What are the research questions around which the project is centred?
- How will social media inform responses to the research questions?
- Will social media be a data source and/or is it an object of study?
- What other potential data sources will support the project?
- Do research questions imply a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach?
- What expertise, skills, and tools will the project require?
- What forms of knowledge will the project produce or contribute to?

Identify project stakeholders

- Who are the project's stakeholders?
- Which users, communities and networks are part of the project? Will they be consulted, cited, or recognized? What are the potential limits of consulting directly with these individuals or groups?
- How is the project connected to wider research communities?
- How will the communication of results impact project stakeholders? How will stakeholders and contributors be acknowledged in the research outputs?

Identify social media research context(s)

- What platform(s) will serve as research context?
- What are the platform's normative conventions of use and expectations for participation? What are some of the social, cultural, and technical characteristics of the platform?
- What are the platform's terms of use for academic research? What data are made available to researchers, and how?

Identify data sources

- What type(s) of social media data will support the project? For example: text-based, visual, auditory?
- What is the data's context of use? For example: hashtags, individual posts and comments, discussion thread, group, event, public account?

Identify methods of data collection

- How will data be collected? Are the methods in line with the platform's terms of use?
- Will automated collection techniques be used? What expertise is required to automate the process? Who will facilitate this portion of the research?
- Will manual collection techniques be used? How will data be systematically collected and organized? Who will facilitate this portion of the research?
- What additional resources are required to collect data? For example: tools, expertise, training?

Consult Institutional Research Ethics Board

- Would consultation with a research ethics board (REB) clarify institutional best practices and protocols for social media research?
- Will the project require review by an REB?

Consider privacy, anonymity, consent

- How does the project consider privacy, anonymity, and consent?
- For projects where individual posts and comments are collected, will research participants be informed? If not, how will privacy, anonymity, and consent be taken into consideration in later stages of the project?
- How sensitive is the data? Are special precautions required to secure it?
- Can data be shared? With the public? With other researchers? What forms of sharing will benefit research goals?
- Will ethical considerations related to privacy, anonymity and consent shape the types of data collected and the sharing and reuse of datasets?
- How will personal identifiers with respect to name, location, and other identifiable content be removed?

Tell us what you think:

To provide feedback on this Project Design Questionnaire and support the development of updated versions, please complete our feedback survey: <https://u.mcmaster.ca/sme-feedback>.

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