Centre for Digital Transformation of Health

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

A co-designed diversity, equity and inclusion check-in tool for consumers as research partners or students in digital health Higher Professional Education (HPE)

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Introduction

This Consumer Tool was co-designed to support the meaningful embedding of diversity, inclusion and equity (DI/DEI) in digital health research and education within MDHS. It provides a structured, anonymous way for consumers involved in research projects and students participating in health professional education (HPE) courses to share feedback on their experiences. The tool is used as a final step in assessing how well DI principles have been applied in practice and supports continuous improvement to ensure inclusive approaches become business as usual.

Alignment with MDSH Advancing Health 2030

The implementation of recruiting for diversity and research design adjustments aligns with the MDHSDI strategic direction and the Advancing Health 2030 mission to:

- Empower researchers to gain valuable diversity and inclusion knowledge, skills, and capacity preparing them to be leaders, change agents and global citizens.
- Building community trust by working closely with our communities who will see us as active partners who plan jointly to help them meet their needs.
- Engage health consumers, particularly from disadvantaged populations, to ensure our cross-cutting research and education addresses current and future needs.
- Engage with the communities that we and our partners serve by understanding their needs and co-designing solutions to the problems they face
- Promoting health equity ensuring research benefits build equitably across populations rather than concentrating among already-advantaged groups.

Background and significance

The Consumer Tool was developed following a completed scoping review and consumer review of the companion researcher and educator tools. Consumers contributed directly to shaping this tool after reviewing evidence-based approaches identified in the scoping review and recommending additional literature they considered relevant to diversity, racism and marginalisation in health research and education.

Consumers agreed that established principles—particularly the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Principles for Co-producing Research and principles developed by CDTH—should underpin the tool. Recognising shared experiences across groups, consumers recommended a single tool be used by both research partners and students. The tool was developed through an online focus group and follow-up discussions, resulting in a two-part anonymous survey administered midway through and at the end of a project or course. This approach enables real-time responsiveness as well as summative reflection, supporting sustained embedding of DI practices across MDHS activities.

Using the Tool: Guidance from Consumers

This consumer co-designed tool supports safe, inclusive and meaningful feedback on how diversity, inclusion and equity (DI/DEI) are embedded in research projects and education courses. It is completed by **consumers involved in research** and **students participating in courses**, using a **two-part anonymous survey**. During the consumers' review of shortlisted approaches/tools from the scoping review they agreed that additional literature familiar to them should be utilised to support development of the Consumer-led Tool [1][2][3]. Notwithstanding, a paper from the original scoping review stood out to the group as being useful in providing historical and current contexts of racism and marginalisation, deepening their knowledge and understanding of the imperative to address the needs of priority populations in health research and education [4].

Consumers emphasised that **anonymity, accessibility and psychological safety** are essential for honest feedback. To support people with limited English proficiency, low literacy or learning challenges, the survey is written using the **Easy Read method**, aligned with the Australian Government Style Manual. This also supports students (future clinicians) to learn the importance of clear, accessible communication in health and research settings. The tool is completed in two stages and should be available in flexible digital formats and accessible across devices.

Survey Part A: Midway check-in
Completed midway through a project or course, this survey invites reflection on experiences to date, including whether participants feel included, supported and valued. Feedback from Part A is shared with researchers and educators so they can respond in real time and adjust approaches where needed.

Survey Part B: Final check-in
Completed after involvement has ended, this survey captures overall reflections and assesses the effectiveness of DI/DEI practices, supporting continuous improvement.

To further support open participation, consumers recommended:

- independent survey administration to ensure anonymity
- bilingual peer support where appropriate
- access to an independent scribe for participants with ESL
- optional support from trusted independent figures (e.g. consumer or Indigenous leads)

The Tool

Survey Part A: Midway check-in for your research project/education course

This anonymous survey is to check in with you to see how you are feeling about your involvement in your research project/course. Your feedback is important to us because it helps us learn how to support you well, while you spend time with our research team/in our class. The survey does not let the researchers/educators know who is filling it out so feel free to share as much as you feel comfortable sharing. This will help us make any changes during the project/course that will improve the way we work together. To start the survey, think of what it has been like as a consumer research partner/student from the beginning of the project/course until now.

Question	Yes/No/Not sure/ Not Applicable	Comments or examples
Have you been comfortable? Example answers to help you: • I can find everything I need • I can eat the food on offer • I can find the room easily		
Have you been given guidance? Example answers to help you: • I know what I'm supposed to do • I have guidelines from my teacher/research lead • I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do		
Are there some principles to follow? Example answers to help you: • We agreed to some principles at the beginning • I don't know of any principes		

• The principles are good		
Have you been feeling safe and supported? Example answers to help you: • I feel safe • I feel nervous • I feel comfortable • I feel judged • I feel ignored • I need more support		
Can we help you with any concerns? Example answers to help you: • Nothing is concerning me now • I need extra help • Can someone else help me in my language?		
Is the place and time when we meet ok? Example answers to help you: • I can get to the place easily • The travel is difficult for me • I would like to meet online • I look after my children after 3pm		
Are you enjoying this project / course? Example answers to help you: • I like doing this work • I find the information difficult to understand • I am learning • The researcher / teacher is interesting		
Are we looking after your privacy? Example answers to help you: • My personal information is safe • I feel secure and safe • I don't know if my privacy is safe or not		
Do we make the course/research project easy to understand? Example answers to help you: • I understand the language • I don't understand a lot of the language • I don't know English very well • I need an interpreter		
Are first languages available (if required) for those with English as a second language (ESL)? Example answers to help you: • I need an interpreter • Some people do not understand • The teacher talks too fast • I don't understand some words • Information is clear and simple		
Do you need help from a support person? Example answers to help you:		

• I don't know where to get extra help • I would like someone to help me • I don't need extra help		
Sociocultural considerations		
If your project/course is about Indigenous peoples, is it led my Indigenous people? Example answers to help you: • Indigenous people are helping to lead this project/course • I think an Indigenous person should run this • There are no Indigenous people teaching this		
Does the researcher/teacher look after the differences within your team/group? Example answers to help you: • The teacher organises us well • The researcher is good at looking after all the different people and what they think • I get interrupted a lot • Lots of people talk at the same time • The men speak too loudly		
Is the teacher/researcher using lots of different cultural ways to connect with you and your group? Example answers to help you: • We did some yarning today! • We learn in the white way only • I like the researcher/teacher using different cultural ways to help us learn and understand		
Does the teacher/researcher look after everyone's religious beliefs? Example answers to help you: • I've learned a lot about different cultural celebrations • The teacher/researcher doesn't know about cultural holidays • The teacher/researcher doesn't acknowledge other cultures or their celebrations • I had to miss meetings because I'm fasting		
Is a strengths-based approach being applied by the researcher/teacher? Example answer to help you: • The researcher likes talking about the good things that come from my culture • My people are presented as having a hard life		
Do you feel comfortable letting your teacher/researcher know that something is wrong? Example answers to help you: • I feel uncomfortable asking for help from my teacher/researcher • My teacher is good to talk to if I have problems • I'm too scared to talk with the researchers about any problems		

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Please submit to: <independent contact (not researchers/educator)>

Survey Part B: Final check-in for your research project / course

Now that your time with us has ended, we would like to hear how you felt about your involvement from when we checked in with you midway through the project/course. Again, the survey does not let researchers/educators know who is filling it out so feel free to share as much as you feel comfortable sharing.

Question	Yes/No/Not sure/ Not Applicable	Comments or examples
Did the researcher/teacher listen to your comments (from Part A), if any, and change how they worked/taught? How did they do it? Example answers to help you: • They're still doing the same thing • I didn't see any change • The teacher is much better now • The researcher talks slower for me now		
Did you always feel safe and supported to say what you needed to say? Example answers to help you: • Sometimes I felt like I wasn't smart enough • The teacher/researcher supported me a lot • I didn't get to say much • I felt silenced • I felt included and valued		
Can you give examples of diversity and inclusion success that happened during the project/course? Example answers to help you: • Quiet voices were heard and acknowledged • I didn't notice anything • Translations were made easy • Researchers/teachers learned from feedback and changed their approaches quickly • The researcher/teacher gave additional time for those how needed it		

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Please submit to: <independent contact (not researchers/educator)>

References

1. National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia). (2018). *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*. National Health and Medical Research Council.
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