# Guidance on Focus Group based research

Focus group discussion is a research methodology in which a small group of participants gather to discuss a specified topic or an issue to generate data; main characteristic being the interaction between the moderator and the group, as well as the interaction between group members. Focus Group research procedures collect data from several participants in a short amount of time.

**Academic Research and Focus Groups:** Participants should be well informed about the discussion topics, duration of the sessions and location where group discussions will be conducted.

* Information should be provided on who will participate in the focus group to enable to make an informed decision to participate beforehand. This is specifically important for topics that may be considered sensitive and more than minimal risk ([types of review](https://rci.ucmerced.edu/irb/researchers/types-review)).
* Attach focus group question guide to the IRB protocol.

**Informed consent:** Recommendations on adding explicit statements to fully inform the subjects

* + - 1. Participants should be fully informed prior if the session will be audio or video recorded. Participants must be informed about what will be done with the recordings and should explicitly agree to being recorded. If recording is required for participation, it should be stated explicitly.
      2. Since confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of the focus groups, researchers must provide participants with the procedures in place to maintain confidentiality of the research data and inform participants not to repeat what is said in the focus group to others.