

## BNU Psychology: Virtual Reality User Agreement Form

Use of immersive Virtual Reality (VR) can have psychological, physiological and physical side-effects, and after-effects. If you are new to the VR environment, you may not always be aware how you can respond.

To use the VR system, either as a participant, operator or spotter, you must adhere to the following recommendations and warnings:

- All users must be aware of the risks of VR use, and be alert to any signs of distress and discomfort in VR users.
- All staff and students using equipment will receive instructions in safe use, risks and storage.
- Users must demonstrate competency in use and correct operating guidelines.
- Keep area clear and free of trip hazards

### ! Health and Safety Warnings!

***All users of the VR Head Set must be aware of the warnings below in order to reduce the likelihood of personal injury, distress, or damage to property.***

- ❖ **Users with pre-existing medical, or psychiatric, conditions** that could affect safe usage (e.g. heart ailments, balance related conditions, PTSD and anxiety disorders). We do not recommend you participate in VR simulation if you are currently experiencing any of these conditions.
- ❖ **Photosensitive seizures:** there is a possibility that an epileptic episode may be generated. For this reason we *strongly* recommend you do not use the VR headset if you are known to have suffered from epilepsy
- ❖ **Psychological effects of use (e.g. fear, distress):** Be alert to any physical or psychological signs of distress. Be mindful of the content of each VR experience.
- ❖ **History of Sickness/motion sickness** When using VR some people experience nausea and disorientation. If you experience any of these feelings please let us know immediately.
- ❖ **Children:** Users under 18 years old are not permitted to use the VR system in our Psychology Lab.
- ❖ **Susceptibility to adverse reactions:** Do not use the VR headset if you have recently used alcohol, drugs, are 'hung-over', have cold/flu, or any symptoms which could potentially impact balance, coordination and perception. This can also include psychological symptoms, such as anxiety and depression.
- ❖ **Be mindful of the content of the VR simulation:** For example, if you're phobic of Zombies, don't play a Zombie game!
- ❖ **Do not use for an extended period (no more than 30 min at a time).**
- ❖ **Always have at least two 'spotters':** Spotters are there to keep an eye on the VR participant, to ensure they do not walk outside of the 'Play Zone', and keep an eye on the health, safety and

well-being of the participant. You must ensure you understand the role of a 'spotter' before you are allowed to use the VR equipment.

- ❖ **Always use VR within the boundaries of your competence:** It is important to recognise the boundaries of your expertise and competence, particularly if you wish to use the VR within Research, Teaching or Therapy. You are responsible for ensuring you're trained and supervised to an appropriate level for your intended use.

## What are the potential side-effects of VR?

### Physical:

Individuals may vary in their responses to VR. One symptom that is often reported is 'Cyber-Sickness'. If you have never used VR, it may be difficult to predict the likelihood that you will experience this; however a useful tool for monitoring VR-related side effects is the Simulator Sickness Questionnaire (SSQ) (Kennedy et al., 1993). We strongly recommend you fill out the pre and post-VR versions of this questionnaire.

- ❖ **Cyber –sickness:** form of motion sickness with symptoms reported to include nausea, vomiting, eyestrain, disorientation, ataxia, and vertigo (Kennedy, Berbaum, & Drexler, 1994).
- ❖ **After effects:** may include such symptoms as disturbed locomotion, changes in postural control, perceptual-motor disturbances, past pointing, flashbacks, drowsiness, and fatigue.

### Psychological:

- ❖ **Altered sense of reality:** The VR environment is designed to create an altered sense of reality. Therefore, Individuals who are susceptible to hallucinations, delusions and altered states are strongly recommended not to use VR without medical support.
- ❖ **Limited Self-Awareness:** The VR environment can create a sense of escapism. This can provide many therapeutic benefits; however, it can also trigger negative symptoms in some individuals. If you have any psychological conditions which can impact your sense of self-awareness, you are strongly advised to seek medical advice before using VR. These symptoms can include depression and anxiety disorders.

### **User agreement:**

- I confirm that I have read all the information provided and I'm aware of the potential risks and side-effects associated with the use of VR.
- I agree to operate within the boundaries of my personal and professional knowledge and competency.
- I have taken the 'Cyber-Sickness' questionnaire prior to using the VR Head Set, and I have made sure other users in my care have also completed this questionnaire.
- I confirm that I will not use the VR Head set if I have a known history of epilepsy, or related conditions.
- I confirm that I do not have any known psychological/psychiatric conditions which could negatively impact my personal well-being during, or after, a VR experience.
- I agree to comply with the health and safety guidelines provided.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please add any additional comments/notes below:

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact:

psychologylab@bucks.ac.uk