Guideline:
Use of Online Platforms in Human Research

Introduction
This guidance is intended for researchers who wish to use online survey platforms and online participant panel platforms for the purpose of participant recruitment and data collection.

‘Safe harbour’ servers
The Committee considered the use of platforms which use ‘safe harbour’ servers located outside the EU and concluded that they do not fully comply with EU data protection law.

It is recommended that data centres and servers of chosen service providers are located and administered within the EU in full and direct compliance with EU data protection law.

Server requirements
Researchers gathering personal or any other sensitive data via online surveys are required to use a platform which fully and directly complies with EU law.

In instances whereby researchers seek to gather highly personal information of a sensitive nature it is very important that the Irish and EU data protection requirements are unambiguously fulfilled by the chosen service provider.

The Committee does not endorse any specific provider and the onus is on the researcher to identify a suitable tool. However, for examples of previously reviewed and approved online platforms providers, please contact UCD Research Ethics & Integrity

Researchers should also consult UCD IT Services if they are in any doubt over these matters.