

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Withdrawal and Course-Changing amongst Undergraduates in Scotland: A Qualitative, Cross-Institutional Study

You are being invited to take part in research on withdrawal and course-changing (in some universities 'programme of study' is used rather than course) in Scotland. Professor Gale Macleod and Dr Fiona O'Hanlon at the University of Edinburgh are leading this research which has been commissioned by the Carnegie Education Fund. Before you decide whether to take part it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to generate a national, cross-institutional understanding of why undergraduate students in Scotland withdraw from, or change, their courses, in order to inform evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

We would like to interview students who have either withdrawn from their studies or have changed their programme (either at the same university, or by switching to another university). We are interested in the experiences of students who identify as coming from a low-income family, are first in family to attend university or attended a school where a low proportion of pupils go on to Higher Education. We are also interested in hearing from students who are care-experienced, estranged from family, or are a carer for family – as we hope that our research will help us to understand the impact of such factors on students' university experiences, and to develop policy and practices to support students in the future.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Deciding not to take part or withdrawing from the study will not lead to any adverse consequences.

Please note that your data may be used in the production of formal research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, and reports) prior to your withdrawal, after which time it will be impossible for your data to be removed, and so you are advised to contact the research team at the earliest opportunity should you wish to withdraw from the study.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DECIDE TO TAKE PART?

If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet. You will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. As the interviews are likely to take place online, your consent will be sought electronically (on the next page of this Microsoft Form), and again verbally at the start of the interview.

If you agree to take part, we will ask you to complete a very brief (one page) questionnaire through Microsoft Forms to get some background information (e.g. name, age, ethnicity, university, programme/ course, your background and any caring or working responsibilities). The information collected through this questionnaire will be used to inform the discussion during your interview and will also be used to ensure we are including participants with a range of experiences.

During the interview you will be asked about your experiences leading up to your application to university, while at university, and your decision to withdraw/ change course. Interviews will take place online (using MS Teams). The interview will take place at a time that is convenient to you. Ideally, we would like to audio record your responses (and will ask for your consent for this). The questionnaire should take 5 minutes to complete whilst the interview is likely to take between 45 minutes and an hour.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

Participants will receive a small token of thanks for taking part in the form of a £20 gift token. There are no other direct benefits, but by sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping us and the Carnegie Education Fund to better understand the barriers to retention and progression experienced by undergraduate students. We anticipate that the findings will be used to inform institutional strategies, national policy and funding decisions.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS OR DISADVANTAGES ASSOCIATED WITH TAKING PART?

There are no significant risks associated with participation. However, it may be that some participants experience some distress talking about what may have been challenging and upsetting incidents. After all interviews we will email participants a list of services which can offer support.

WILL MY TAKING PART BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

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All the information we collect during the course of the research will be kept confidential and there are strict laws which safeguard your privacy at every stage.

HOW WILL WE USE INFORMATION ABOUT YOU?

We will need to use information you provide us with for this research project. We will keep all information about you safe and secure.

This information will include your name, age, ethnicity, university, course/ programme, and details about your under-resourced status.

Your data will be anonymised in our records. If you consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be stored in a password-protected folder. Your interview will be transcribed, and anonymised (that is to say we would remove any information that could identify you.) All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer file which will be stored on Sharepoint, an encrypted storage service. Any paper records will be scanned and the electronic copy stored in a password protected folder. The paper copy will be destroyed. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses to minimise risk of identification.

Subject to your consent, anonymised transcripts of the interviews and questionnaire responses will be saved in the University of Edinburgh's DataShare portal for possible use by future researchers. Deanonymised data will not be shared with any other person or organisation, and data will not be combined with other data. You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason by emailing Gale.MacLeod@ed.ac.uk However, where findings based on your data have already been published, we will not be able to remove your data from the study.

For further information about data privacy for research participants please refer to: <https://data-protection.ed.ac.uk/privacy-notice-research>

Alternatively, you can contact one of the research team for further information.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY?

The findings of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. You will not be identifiable from any published results. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs. With your consent, your anonymised information may also be kept for future research. A summary of the findings from the study will be made available to participants who indicate they would like to receive this. This summary will be sent to participants by email.

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WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?

This study has been organised by Gale Macleod and Fiona O'Hanlon at the Higher Education Research Group, University of Edinburgh. The team also includes Alice Smith (Assistant Director of LEAPS – the Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools, which works with the University of Edinburgh), Dr Colin Brough, who has expertise in Care Experienced young people, and Liyana Qiu, who is a tutor on the LEAPS transition course – supporting young people from school to university.

The study is being funded by The Carnegie Education Fund

WHO HAS REVIEWED THE STUDY?

The study proposal has been reviewed by Moray House School of Education and Sport Ethics Committee.

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

If you have any further questions about the study, please contact the lead researcher, Gale Macleod at gale.macleod@ed.ac.uk.

If you would like to discuss this study with someone independent of the study please contact The Moray House School of Education and Sport Director of Ethics, Dr Marlies Kustatscher at marlies.kustatscher@ed.ac.uk.

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact:

Research Governance Team (cahss.res.ethics@ed.ac.uk)

To express an interest in participating in the study, please click [here](#).