

Participant Information Sheet

A Catalyst for Change: Transforming Responses to Harassment in Higher Education

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research project?

Researchers from the University of Leicester's Centre for Hate Studies are undertaking a 30-month project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council that will investigate:

- The forms of hostility, harassment and abuse experienced by University students.
- The emotional and physical impacts of these experiences.
- The reporting mechanisms and support services used by students.

To achieve this, this project is offering participation through a survey, an interview, and focus groups. As a result of this research, the Centre for Hate Studies will be equipped to support the higher education sector in better preventing unacceptable behaviour and supporting victims when it might occur.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to take part in this research because you are a registered student at the University. All registered students who are aged 18 and over are eligible to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research project. If you do decide to take part, this information sheet will support you in better understanding the purpose of the research and your involvement. You will also be provided with a Privacy Notice that explains how your data will be collected and used. You will be asked to provide your consent to participate through signing a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time before clicking submit on your survey and within two weeks on your interview taking place, without giving a reason, by contacting the project team (catalystforchange@leicester.ac.uk). If you choose to not take part or withdraw from this research, this will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you choose to take part in our survey, you will be asked a series of optional and mandatory questions about your experiences regarding harassment whilst you have been enrolled as a student at your university. This survey is likely to take about 10 minutes to complete in full. You are welcome to omit any particularly identifiable information and skip optional questions if you wish.

If you choose to take part in an interview, you will be asked to review this information sheet, a privacy notice and sign a consent form. Interviews should take no longer than 45 minutes and will take place either on campus or via Microsoft Teams, as arranged with one of the Centre for Hate Studies' researchers. Prior to taking part, you will have the opportunity to ask any questions about this project that you might have. The interview will consist of a series of questions relating to your experiences of harassment. You are welcome to skip any question without giving a reason why, in addition to pausing or exiting the interview if you wish to. This may be supported by a mapping exercise to support you in answering questions about spaces on and around campus. All interviews must be audio recorded to ensure that your views are properly represented in our analysis.

Any participation in this research will result in you being provided with information about disclosing, reporting and support services that you are eligible to access free of charge.

Your participation in this research will not affect the support you are receiving from any of the Student/ University services. It will also not affect any ongoing university proceedings and/or investigations.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in this research may involve you talking about some difficult memories or encounters. The research team are trained to support you during these discussions. If at any time you feel that you would like to pause or terminate your involvement, then it is your right to ask for this from the researcher and no further questions will be asked. Any level of involvement in this project will result in you being provided with reporting and support options that are freely available to you, should you wish to access them.

If you disclose information that indicates that you present a risk to your own or somebody else's safety, then confidentiality will be broken and this will be reported to your institution's Student Support Team, who may escalate this information further.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part in this research study could potentially benefit others by providing more robust research in relation to what unacceptable behaviours are enacted against students and what is needed to prevent this behaviour and support those affected. Other possible benefits include involvement in co-creating our Student Manifesto for Change, which is an output from this project that will be sent to every Higher Education Institute in England and Wales at the end of this research, instructing universities how they can embed good practice from a student's perspective.

What data will you collect about me?

Your data will constitute either survey responses and/or interview responses about your views and experiences regarding harassment in higher education. Whilst the questions will ask you to reflect upon your personal experiences, the data collected will not be used to identify you. You will also be asked basic demographic questions so that we can monitor trends in victimisation and ensure that our work is representative of the university makeup.

Will what I say in this research project be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your survey responses are anonymous and once interview data has been transcribed this will also have undergone a process of anonymisation.

The research team will only break confidentiality in cases of safeguarding. This is where you disclose information that implies that you or another person are in imminent risk of harm. Cases such as this will be reported to your University's student support team, who may wish to escalate the case further if they deem it necessary.

How will you look after the data you collect about me?

We need to ensure that you understand what will happen to data we collect about you as well as your legal rights. This document is accompanied with a separate Privacy Notice providing further details, which you will be provided with alongside this form.

Your normal rights under the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation apply. However, we need to manage your records in specific ways for the research project to be reliable and to keep your responses anonymous. This means that we won't always be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you.

You can stop being part of the research project without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have if we are not instructed otherwise by you within two weeks of your interview taking place and continue to use this for the purposes of the research project as outlined above.

Data that you have provided will be kept securely at all times. Identifiable data will be deleted at the point of transcription. The rest of your data will be kept for no longer than six years as per funder regulations. Completely non-identifiable and analysed data may be kept indefinitely in a coding frame. As per ESRC funder requirements, our research instruments will be available to view on the UK Data Archive repository, however, due to the sensitivities of the data, your responses will not be uploaded.

At all times this research study will comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Your anonymised data will form part of the results of this research and the findings will inform various academic, creative and policy focused outputs. These will be freely accessible on the Centre for Hate Studies website at the end of 2027 when this project has finished. These outputs will be used to inform policy and practice changes across the Higher Education sector and may inform future research projects.

What should I do if I want to take part?

To take part in our survey, you will have to click that you consent to taking part after reviewing the necessary information, which will direct you straight to taking part. To take part in an interview, you can opt-in at the end of the survey or email the project team directly

(catalystforchange@leicester.ac.uk), who will provide you with an Informed Consent Form and to opt-in to a variety of research options by ticking the Yes or No box. This will confirm you understand how your data will be processed, protected and reviewed for research purposes. When this is returned, we will schedule an interview either in-person on campus or online via Microsoft Teams.

You have until April 2026 to take part in our survey, until June 2026 to take part in an interview and until September 2026 to take part in a focus group.

Who is organising and funding the research project?

This research is being undertaken by the Centre for Hate Studies, based at the University of Leicester. The Principal Investigator is Professor Neil Chakraborti (Director of the Centre for Hate Studies), and the Co-Investigator is Dr Amy Clarke (Deputy Director of the Centre for Hate Studies). The Postdoctoral Researchers on this project are Dr Talitha Brown and Dr Yunyan Li. This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

What if something goes wrong?

In the very unlikely event of you being harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action but you may have to pay for it.

Who has reviewed the research project?

This research project has been approved by the University of Leicester Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any concerns or queries about this research, please contact the project team catalystforchange@leicester.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or queries about the way in which the research project has been conducted, you can contact the Chair of the University of Leicester's Research Ethics Committee via the following email address: ethics@le.ac.uk

If you require more GDPR data protection information then you can access this via the University of Leicester's Information Assurance Services:

*Information Assurance Services
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RH
T: +44 (0)116 229 7945
E: dpo@le.ac
W: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ias>*

Thank you for taking the time to read this participant information sheet.