

## Participant Information



# Qualitative Exploration of Upwork Freelancers' Work-Life Balance

Thank you for your interest in this research study. Before you decide whether you want to take part voluntarily, please read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information about the study, email [carlos.alvarez@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:carlos.alvarez@northumbria.ac.uk), or any of the email addresses at the end of this document. This study has been approved by Northumbria University Ethics Committee as Project ID Number: 2950. This study has *no* relation or association with the Upwork platform in any form.

## Purpose of the study

This research study aims to explore the perceived work-life balance of freelancers who use the platform Upwork to conduct freelance work. We are particularly interested in how Upwork freelancers go about establishing work and personal boundaries. To do so, we will ask you to take part in a diary study with a post-interview. You will use WhatsApp to capture diary entries. In the interview, we will discuss your diary entries, experience using Upwork, and preferences to combine Upwork with other life activities.

## Participant profile

We are recruiting professionals that use the Upwork platform regularly to complete freelance services. To take part you must fulfil the following requirements:

- Be 18 years or older.
- Use the platform Upwork regularly to conduct freelance work and have successfully completed at least one job through the platform.
- Intend to use the Upwork platform as a freelancer during the period of the study.

## Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you withdraw, we will delete any data you would have provided.

## Study stages

In detail, the project will consist of the following four stages:

### 1) Recruitment Survey

In this survey, you will share some details about yourself, your experience with Upwork, and your work-life balance preferences. This survey will determine if you are a suitable candidate for participating in this study. All this information will be kept confidential, and you will only be asked your name to pair your answers with those of subsequent activities related to this study. This survey should not take you more than 10 minutes to complete.

### 2) On-boarding call

This call is aimed at explaining in detail the captures you will complete during the diary study. The lead researcher will reiterate the purposes of the study and clarify any questions you might have. This call will last between 15-30 minutes and take place over Microsoft Teams at a time of your and the researcher's convenience, taking into account time zones.

### 3) Diary Captures

Starting the day after the on-boarding call, you will be asked to capture short diary entries for 14 days. Each day, you will receive a diary prompt on WhatsApp, as well as a reminder to capture your entry and share your response back. Capturing your diary entries should not take you more than 5 minutes to complete, and you should capture them when is most convenient during the day.

You can capture your diary entries using different formats supported by WhatsApp, such as taking photos, recording voice notes, filming yourself, or simply typing down your answers.

The diary prompts will vary across the 14 days and cover the following themes:

- perceptions of your work activities and use of the Upwork platform;
- non-work activities that you enjoy and help you recover from work; and
- perceptions of your work-life boundaries.

\* If you do not have access to WhatsApp, you can still take part in the study by completing the activities and sharing them with the researcher via email.

#### *4) Post-diary interview*

Within a week of completing your diary, you will take part in an interview. The purpose of this interview is to talk through your diary captures, provide more details, and more contextual explanations. The interview will last between 60-90 minutes and will take place over Microsoft Teams at a date and time of your and researcher's convenience, taking into account time zones.

## **Compensation**

Once you complete all four stages of the study (survey, on-boarding call, 14-day diary captures, and post-diary interview), you will receive an Amazon voucher worth £30 as a compensation for your time.

## **Data collection**

We will collect data from the four stages of the study: recruitment survey, on-boarding call, 14-day diary captures, and post-diary interview. All data will be stored in accordance with University guidelines and the Data Protection Act (2018).

We will have access to the data you provide in the recruitment survey. This data will be anonymised, and your name will not appear in any form of analysis. If you are *not* a suitable candidate to participate in this study, the principal researcher

will notify you via email, and all the information you might have provided in the survey will be permanently deleted.

We will audio record and transcribe the on-boarding call. The audio recording will be deleted, and the transcript anonymised. The anonymised transcript will be retained and might be used in other research.

We will be using WhatsApp, a messaging app, to prompt and share diary captures. All data shared through WhatsApp is end-to-end encrypted. You can [read WhatsApp's privacy policy here](#). After the 14-day diary, the chat history will be exported to a password protected computer and permanently deleted from the mobile device designated for the study. Your WhatsApp contact number will too be deleted from the device.

We will audio record and transcribe the post-diary interview. The audio recording will be deleted, and the transcript anonymised. The anonymised transcript will be retained and might be used in other research.

If you withdraw from the study, we will delete any data we have collected from you. If you withdraw after the post-diary interview and our data analysis has begun, it may be difficult to identify your data and remove it from the dataset.

## **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Your name will not be written on any of the data we collect; the written information you provide will have an ID number – not your name. Your name will not be written on the recorded interview, or on the typed-up versions of your discussions from the interview, and your name will not appear in any reports or documents resulting from this study. All the data collected from you in this study will be confidential, taking especial care of any media you might share during the diary captures.

## **Study results**

The data will be used for our research study, meaning we store and analyse the anonymised

data and use excerpts and summaries in research publications.

The general findings might be reported in a scientific journal or presented at a research conference, and be part of teaching materials, however the data will be anonymised and the data you have provided (including information related to your work) will not be personally identifiable in any form. We can provide you with a summary of the findings from the study if you email the researcher at the address listed below.

We would like to make the anonymised transcripts available in a research repository for use by other researchers and in teaching. You do not have to agree to open publication of the full transcript and data if you do not want this to happen.

## **Contacts**

### **Principal researcher:**

Carlos Alvarez (Doctoral Researcher, Computing and Information Sciences, Northumbria University) [carlos.alvarez@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:carlos.alvarez@northumbria.ac.uk)

### **Supervisory team:**

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