

Participant information sheet

I am a, part-time, PhD student at Lancaster University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about your experiences of the online conversation tool, developed by myself, that you have been using throughout this current unit. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to develop, understand (from the students' perspective) and introduce an innovative new discussion environment into the learning setting.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because you are participating in a unit where I will be evaluating the new discussion environment mentioned above. As such, your future experiences and interactions will provide a valuable insight into the characteristics of this new tool.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decide to take part, your interactions in the online discussion platform will be subject to analysis. Further to this, you will be invited to complete an anonymous survey. Your interactions with these data collection methods will remain anonymous.

You may also be invited to participate, in either or both, a 45-minute-long focus group and a one-to-one interview. These sessions will take place, remotely, over Microsoft Teams. Audio, video and screen sharing activity will be recorded and securely saved to Microsoft Stream.

The focus group will have open, honest and respectful opinion exchange, and any information disclosed within the focus group remains confidential to the group, and you will not reveal the names of participants outside the focus group.

Participation in the surveys, focus groups and interviews is optional.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Your participation feeds into the understanding and development of an online discussion environment that is intended to support the wider university learning experience. You will be indirectly helping students who may benefit from the use of this tool in the future.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw, all or part of the data used in the study, **within two weeks** of an interview or focus group taking place. If you no longer want your interactions in the online discussion environment used in the study, you should do this within **4 weeks of volunteering to take part in this study**. You should note, survey specific data cannot be removed - this is due to the survey data being anonymous. Withdrawal requests should be sent to joe.appleton@solent.ac.uk. On receiving the request, relevant data will be removed from the study. If you withdraw from the focus group, the I'll do my best to disregard your views when analysing the focus group data, but this will not always be possible

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no clearly identified risks associated with taking part in this study. If you are required to be interviewed or take part in a focus group, then there is a time commitment of no more than 60 minutes per session.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, focus group and online interaction analysis, only myself and Natasa Lackovic (my PhD supervisor) will have access to your data. I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project. Participants in the focus group will be asked not to disclose information outside of the focus group and with anyone not involved in the focus group without the relevant person's permission.

How will the data be recorded and stored?

Focus groups and interviews will take place, remotely, over Microsoft Teams. Audio, video and screen sharing activity will be recorded and securely saved to Microsoft Stream. Copies will also be transferred to One Drive shared information space and/or encrypted files on my computer. With regards to the surveys, the data will be anonymous and stored in university database. All the data will be kept for a minimum of 10 years and subsequently destroyed.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use it for research purposes only and will aim to anonymise and disseminate the results.

As such, the processed results could appear in journal articles, my PhD thesis, conference papers and presentations.

When writing up the findings, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. However, although I will use your exact words, **all steps will be taken to protect your anonymity** in my publications.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself: Joe Appleton, Tel: 07986836915, Email: joe.appleton@solent.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact: Prof. Paul Ashwin, Head of Department, Email: paul.ashwin@lancaster.ac.uk Department of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YL, United Kingdom. Tel : +44 (0) 1524 594443

Sources of support

In some projects, sensitive and potentially distressing topics may be discussed as part of the research. In such cases, it is good practice to add sources of support participants can turn to.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection
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Thank you for considering your participation in this project.