



Participant Information Sheet

Researchers

This study is being carried out by Chief Investigator Dr Sarah Walker, and several research assistants.

Project Title

Student transition and retention support

Outline of the project

Description and Methodology: This is a semi-structured individual interview (or online questionnaire) that aims to explore, understand and examine the experiences of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds at ANU. It is done either through interviews or via an online questionnaire, to ensure the experience is directed by you and to allow you the space to tell your personal experience. We're doing this to learn more about the transition, academic and social experiences of students.

The interviews will be conducted and recorded via Zoom, with the recordings saved directly to an ANU password protected computer. The audio recordings are then transcribed using a speech recognition transcription service, this allows us to focus on our conversation during the interview. The interview can go forward without being recorded, it is being utilised as the default interview method to allow the interviewer to fully concentrate on the conversation but if you do not want the interview to be recorded the interviewer can take notes instead.

As an alternative participation pathway, participants may complete an online questionnaire, where they respond to the same questions as in the interview but in written form.

Participants: We are inviting current, domestic undergraduate students at ANU who are from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to participate. Information coming out of the interviews or written responses will be shared in a way to reduce the potential that individuals will be identifiable, this is to allow you to openly share your experience without others being aware that the experience is yours. It should be noted there is always the potential that individuals can be identified from the way they speak and the stories they tell. Steps will be taken to reduce the potential for you to be individually identified but it is always a risk with interviews and open ended questionnaires.

Use of data and Feedback: Zoom's inbuilt transcription service utilising advanced speech recognition software will be employed to translate the audio/video recording into a transcript at which time the interviewer will remove identifying items and then utilise the transcripts with the research team for analysis. The responses from participants (from both the interviews and questionnaire) will be used in a de-identified

format as part of a report to evaluate the University's transition and retention programs and make recommendations for improvements, and may be published as part of journal articles, chapters and presented at professional conferences. All results will be presented to minimise the likelihood of individual participant identification.

Participants will be able to view the final written report with the results of the study upon completion here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/f627gbctzurhxrfp91ts1/AMzXtG97qYtCO99ehMg14zl?rlkey=utoapr97xief4ibexd6gkk8ze&st=ln3x739g&dl=0>

Participant Involvement

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to take part or withdraw from the research without providing an explanation at any time until the findings are prepared for publication. You can refuse to answer questions in the interview or skip any question in the questionnaire. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw will not affect your relationship with The Australian National University. If you decided to leave the research study, no additional information will be collected from you. If you choose to withdraw completely the recording and transcription will be deleted.

What does participation involve: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview or questionnaire where you will be asked questions about your transition to ANU, what you may be struggling with most during your first and later years, what challenges and barriers you might be facing during your time, and what has been most supportive and helpful during your studies. You will also be asked some demographic questions such as what year of study you are in and whether you moved to Canberra for study. As this is a semi-structured interview other topics can be discussed if you choose to raise them. The interviewer or research team may reach out to clarify something you have said with further questions once we begin reviewing the transcripts and written responses. As with the rest of this project, your participation in additional questions or conversations is voluntary and you can, without negative consequences, decline to answer additional questions or engage in a further conversation without providing an explanation.

Location and duration: The interviews will be conducted online via Zoom and is estimated to take **1 hour** to complete. The interviewer may request additional conversations in order to clarify something you have said or if something arises during the analysis.

Remuneration: Eligible students who participate in the study will receive a \$20 digital gift voucher. The voucher will be sent to your nominated email address within 7 days of your interview being conducted.

Risks: Due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions in this study (i.e. reflecting on potentially difficult situations you have been in in relation to your time at ANU which could include experiences of homelessness, financial hardship, poor mental or physical health and family pressure, or experiences of social harm caused by the structure of society and its impact on you), there is a risk that you may feel psychological distress when reflecting on certain experiences. The study has been designed so you can determine what information and experience you share to allow you to only raise issues and experiences you are comfortable discussing but distress is still possible. If the questions do raise feelings of discomfort or distress, we can pause or stop the interview at any time and you are also able to withdraw your participation. If you are

participating via the questionnaire instead of the interview, you may choose to skip any question by leaving the response block blank.

There are also support services available through ANU and elsewhere (see below), and the researcher can discuss these with you during or after the interview if you wish. All interviewers on the research project have experience supporting student well-being and have knowledge of the support services available both at ANU and externally.

Interviews and open ended responses carry a risk of individual identification due to the way individuals speak and the stories they tell. We will take a number of precautions in an attempt to prevent this from occurring including utilising a pseudonym that will only be known to the research team, and amending key specifics within the experience such as changing the name of your degree, the hall you live in, town you come from, etc. but it should be noted that there is still the potential you can be recognised by someone who reads a resulting publication and we must advise you to avoid defaming anyone or revealing information that you may later regret or that could put you at risk.

Benefits: It is unlikely that you will benefit personally from participating in this research, but you will have the opportunity to provide insight we do not yet have regarding student transition and retention, and how the institution can impact on long-term academic and personal achievement. This insight will help us make changes and improve the experience students have at ANU. An improved student experience increases the likelihood of the overall success at university of other students like yourself.

Confidentiality

Interviews are non-anonymous by nature, particularly when conducted via video conference. As such, your data in this study will be confidential, but not anonymous. What this means is that your responses will not be linked to your name, and you will be offered the opportunity to choose a pseudonym at the start of the interview which will be utilised in all reports and papers to “identify” you. Participants who chose to respond to the questionnaire rather than the interview will also have the opportunity to select a pseudonym. All data will remain confidential to the researchers involved in this research project, as far as the law allows. Data, including audio/video recordings, transcriptions, questionnaire responses and analysis, will be stored securely within ANU OneDrive, with raw data, audio/video recordings and transcriptions with identifying items such as names, restricted to a folder that only the interviewers on the research team have access to. Transcriptions and questionnaire responses will be provided to the rest of the research team once identifying items have been removed/modified, i.e. the name of residential halls changed to a different name. You will have the opportunity to review your de-identified transcript before it is provided to the research team if you wish.

Privacy Notice

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at <https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP 010007>. It contains information about how a person can:

- Access or seek correction to their personal information;

- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint

Data Storage

Where: The data will be held within ANU OneDrive accessible only by the interviewers. Data will continue to be stored according to ANU privacy requirements and will not be linked to participants' identifying data.

How long: The research team will store data collected from you for this research project for a minimum of five years after the date of any publication of research results.

Handling of data following the required storage period: After your data is no longer needed for the current research, it will be retained in a de-identified format in ANU OneDrive. In the consent form, you will be asked whether it is okay for your de-identified data to be used by the research team or shared with other researchers for the purposes of research that extends on, is closely related to, or is in the same general field as the current research.

Queries and Concerns

Contact details for more information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact the Chief Investigator Sarah Walker sarah.swenson@anu.edu.au

Contact details if in distress:

ANU counselling services

- ANU Counselling Centre (02) 6125 2442
- ANU Psychology Clinic: (02) 6125 8498

For immediate mental health support (available 24 hours, 7 days a week)

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

If you are in an emergency situation or need immediate assistance, call emergency services on:

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Ethics Committee Clearance

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2026/0061).

If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au