

## Participant Information – Survey Participants

### ***STUDY: International student experiences and the impact of COVID***

This research project, titled *International student experiences and the impact of COVID*, has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: HREC/3610/Sondhi.

<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>

### **Invitation to participate**

You are being invited to take part in a research study by **completing an online survey questionnaire**. Before you decide whether 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. If you do agree to participate, please reading the following information before completing the consent form.

The project is about the experiences of international students in the current COVID crisis.

Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your marks, assessments, or future studies.

The research looks at the how international students in the UK have been influenced and affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and global lock-down. This project aims to give voice to student experiences, and to find solutions to support international students enrolled at UK Higher Education Institutions.

More details on the project, why it is being done and what your participation will involve are given below. We hope you will find it useful in will help you to decide whether you want to participate in this study.

### **General information about the research study**

**Purpose of the research:** The purpose of the research is to capture the experiences of international students during the Covid-19 lock-down, as well as their experiences as lock-down restrictions are lifted. The research will result in targeted, evidence-based recommendations to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), the UK Higher Education sector and national-level migration policy-makers, in order to better support international students in the UK.

**Funding:** The project is funded by The Open University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, through the Faculty's Strategic Research Investment Fund.

**External partner:** The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) is supporting the project by providing advice to the research team and promoting the online survey through its professional networks. UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs). The Open University is the Data Controller for the personal data that you provide. UKCISA and the university at which you are enrolled will *not* have access to the information you give us.

**Timeframe:** The data collection part of the study will run for 2 months.

### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?**

Your participation in this study will involve answering a **short online survey questionnaire**. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete.

**Survey questionnaire topics:** The topics within the survey are all aspects of your personal experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and global-lockdown, including:

- What options you felt you had in terms of staying in the UK or travelling home or elsewhere;
- Any impacts on your migration status;
- The impact on your studies and educational experience;
- The impact on your financial arrangements;
- Impacts on housing/accommodation;
- Your experiences, if any, of isolation, social exclusion, prejudice or racism;
- The extent and quality of institutional support you have received;
- Insight into your future intentions.

**If participating in the survey causes you distress:** The pandemic and lock-down has been a disruptive and challenging experience for many international students. If participating in the study causes you distress, you can contact the counselling service offered by your university. However, if they have a long waiting list, then please consider contacting one of the following organizations:

- <https://www.giveusashout.org/>, is oriented to those under 25 years of age.
- <https://nightline.org.uk/> Nightline is run by students and offers online and text-based support.
- <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/supportforme.html>
- <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

**The survey questionnaire and confidentiality:** the survey data will be collated, analysed and the findings published in a project report and peer reviewed academic journals. However, no individual data (i.e. nothing about you personally) will be identifiable.

**Anonymity:** The information you give us will be separated from your name (anonymized), so that what you say cannot be linked to your name in any report or publication.

**Voluntary Participation/withdrawal:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis (31 October, 2020). After this point withdrawal is not possible. You do not have to tell us why you want to withdraw from the study. In the event you withdraw from the study, any information you have given us, including your name and contact details, will be immediately destroyed in accordance with the University's information and record management guidelines. If you choose to withdraw *during* the survey, please click the 'withdraw survey' button. If you want to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, please email any member of the project team (contact details shown above).

**Benefits and Risks:** There are no identifiable personal risks to you. You could benefit in the long run through improved decision making around international students in the contemporary crisis.

**Option to participate in an in-depth interview:** The survey will give you a choice to participate further via an in-depth interview with a member of the research team, conducted via Skype, Microsoft Teams or telephone. The first 25 students to express interest in participating further will be contacted by the research team. The interview will cover the same topics as the questionnaire, but in more depth.

**Outputs from the study:** These include a project report to be shared with UKCISA, other UK Higher Education institutions and national-level migration policy-makers (organizations may share the findings as they see fit). We will also publish the findings in academic peer-reviewed journals. All publications will be public facing, i.e. not behind a paywall. The findings of the project will also be shared via the official social media profiles of the project team and those of The Open University. The survey will give you the opportunity to opt-in (via a button) to receiving an email about the project's findings

## How will the data I provide be used?

**Data processing:** data will be collected, collated, aggregated and anonymized (removal of personally identifying information) using the third party Qualtrics data management platform. Qualtrics complies with UK/EU data protection regulations.

**Storage and sharing:** As per The Open University's Research Data Management Policy (effective from 01/12/2018) for internally funded projects, the digital data collected will be stored on a secure Open University server, and any printed versions of that data will be stored in locked staff offices at The Open University campus in Milton Keynes, UK. No raw data will be stored or shared outside the EU.

**Data retention:** as per The Open University's data Retention Schedule guidance, the data will be stored at least until completion of analysis of responses. However, because multiple analyses may be undertaken, and in case questions are raised after publication/dissemination of the findings, the raw data and consent forms will be kept until 31 December 2027. At the end of the project, the fully anonymized survey will be deposited in a specialist ESRC data centre, so it can be used for future research and learning. The fully anonymized data will also be kept indefinitely, on secure OU servers, for future re-use. These protocols are in accordance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of 25/05/18.

If you are concerned about the way we have processed your personal information, you can contact the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO). Please visit the ICO's website for further details.

## How do I agree to take part?

If you are willing to participate in the study via this survey questionnaire, please complete the 'Participant Consent' section (next) before you proceed with the online questionnaire.

## Project leaders

Dr Gunjan Sondhi, Principle Investigator (PI, the project leader and primary contact), Lecturer in Geography, [gunjan.sondhi@open.ac.uk](mailto:gunjan.sondhi@open.ac.uk), Tel: (0)1908 654456

Prof. Parvati Raghuram, Co-Investigator (Co-I, secondary contact) Professor in Geography, [parvati.raghuram@open.ac.uk](mailto:parvati.raghuram@open.ac.uk), Tel: (0)1908 654456

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Gunjan Sondhi in the first instance, or the Co-investigator Professor Parvati Raghuram ([Parvati.raghuram@open.ac.uk](mailto:Parvati.raghuram@open.ac.uk)). If this is unsuccessful or inappropriate, please contact the Geography Head of Department, Dr Shonil Bhagwat, [Shonil.Bhagwat@open.ac.uk](mailto:Shonil.Bhagwat@open.ac.uk) / Tel: (0)1908 654456 who can act as an alternative independent contact

**Contact details:** All staff can be contacted via: Geography Department, School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, FASS, The Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, MK7 6AA. Tel: (0)1908 654456 / F +44 (0)1908 654488

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information.**