



## **Participant Information Sheet – Students and Lecturers/Support Staff**

### **Title of Study:**

**Students on the autism spectrum attending higher education: Challenges for students and educators.**

### **Dear Participant,**

My name is Majella Mulhall. I am a registered student on the Doctor of Education at Queens University, Belfast. I am currently working on my research dissertation for this qualification.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this information sheet.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The overall aims and objectives of this research is to investigate if learners on the autism spectrum are having their special educational needs met while attending higher education institutes in the Republic of Ireland.

Also, to identify and determine how higher education providers can provide a more inclusive setting for learners with special educational needs.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because this study seeks to:

- (a) Ascertain the views of current college students on the autism spectrum and
- (b) Lecturers/disability/access officers who are working with students with a diagnosis of ASD in higher education.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. It is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you

choose to take part, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect the standard of care you receive.

However, if you do wish to **withdraw your data** from the process, there is a time limit. You can withdraw **up until anonymisation of your data has been completed**. After this point it will not be possible to withdraw your data.

If you do wish to withdraw you need to notify me directly.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you decide to participate you will be asked to attend an interview or complete a questionnaire. This interview/questionnaire will take approximately 45 minutes - 1 hour to complete. If you agree to take part in an interview it will take place virtually via Microsoft Teams at a date and time agreed between us in advance. If you decide to complete the questionnaire, which is created via Microsoft Forms, I will send it to you via email.

### **What are the possible risks or disadvantages of taking part?**

If at any time during the interview you feel anxious or distressed, the interview can be stopped. The interviewer will provide relevant signage that you can use if you wish to stop the interview at any time.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

**Students:** You will get the opportunity to discuss how your special educational needs are being met by the college you are attending, along with highlighting how you feel the college could improve their accommodations for students with special educational needs. This will hopefully be used in the future to influence policy on this issue.

**Lecturers/Access Officers:** You will get the opportunity to discuss the challenges you encounter in teaching, learning and assessment practices while working with learners who are on the autism spectrum. This study will also give you an opening to discuss what you feel higher education institutes can do to improve their educational practices to support students with special educational needs. In addition, this study could potentially influence future policy approaches regarding this issue.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

If you have any concerns about any aspects of the study, you can contact the Chief Investigator Majella Mulhall, 087 6334397, mmulhall01.qub.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can contact my academic supervisor in QUB, Dr Cathal McManus via [c.p.mcmanus@qub.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.mcmanus@qub.ac.uk)

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

The interviews will take place in a private room or online, via Microsoft Teams. It is important that you feel comfortable when participating in the interview. Your confidentiality will be protected as strongly as

possible. If, however you disclose an issue of substantial concern and/or crime, your confidentiality may not be guaranteed.

All data collected from the interviews/questionnaires will be held securely on a password protected laptop. All recordings from the interviews/questionnaires will be destroyed once they are transcribed and the anonymised transcriptions securely stored on a password protected laptop.

Upon submission of my dissertation, the anonymised transcriptions will then be securely stored for a period of five years, in line with QUB data handling and security policy.

### **What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results of this research will be included in my thesis and submitted to Queen's University in part fulfilment of my Doctorate qualification. I can provide you with a summary of the results if you wish to view them. In the future, the aim is to publish the results in journal articles in relevant peer reviewed publications.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed by the School of Social Sciences, Education, and Social Work Ethics Committee.

### **Privacy Notice**

This research will be conducted in compliance with data protection legislation. For more information about how we look after your information, how to access your rights and who to contact if you have any queries or concerns about data protection please visit the Queen's University Belfast website - [www.qub.ac.uk/privacynotice/Research/ListofResearchPrivacyNotices/PrivacyNoticeforResearchParticipants](http://www.qub.ac.uk/privacynotice/Research/ListofResearchPrivacyNotices/PrivacyNoticeforResearchParticipants)

If you consent to Majella Mulhall and Queen's University Belfast using and storing your data in the ways described on this page, please tick this box and sign and date below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you wish to discuss about any aspects of the study, you can contact the Chief Investigator Majella Mulhall, 087 6334397, mmulhall01.qub.ac.uk or my supervisor Dr Cathal McManus, 0044 28 9097 5914, [c.p.mcmanus@qub.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.mcmanus@qub.ac.uk).

**Thank you for your interest in this study and for taking the time to read through this information sheet.**