**Information Sheet and Consent Form**

**Fair admission to universities in England: understanding and improving policy and practice**

**Principal Investigator: Professor Vikki Boliver**

**Co-Investigator: Dr Mandy Powell**

We have been funded by the Nuffield Foundation (EDU/42852) to undertake a large-scale and in-depth exploration of how admissions decisions are reached in high demand degree programmes in order to understand how fairness is conceived and operationalised in policy and practice. The project involves an analysis of publicly available admissions policy documents (for example, Access Agreements) and in-depth interviews with admissions personnel in a sample of 21 higher education institutions across England.

Your institution has been included in the interview sample because it has been identified as offering undergraduate degree programmes that are academically selective and in high demand by applicants. We would be grateful if you would be willing to participate in and contribute to this study as someone involved in admissions work for your institution. We would like to have a conversation with you about what your role involves and the everyday challenges you encounter in a university offering academically selective courses with a high demand for places. We are interested in exploring the principles underpinning admissions policies and practices and the opportunities and challenges you encounter in doing this work.

Our aim is not to scrutinise and critique admissions procedures from the outside but to engage with you in a collegial, reflexive and constructive discussion of admissions policies and practices. We are mindful that university admission is a sensitive topic and will ensure that all interview transcripts are fully anonymised, so that nothing you say to us can be identified by others as attributable to your institution or to you as an individual, and we will respect any requests you make for specific statements to be treated as confidential. We will, however, include the list of institutions participating in the study in presentations and publications arising from the project. The interview will be professionally transcribed by a trusted contractor; anonymised and stored securely in a password protected folder on a firewall protected computer; storing separately any information that could be used to de-anonymise the transcripts; and carefully checking all documents intended for circulation outside the research team to ensure that they are non-disclosive. You will receive an anonymised transcript to check for accuracy and to confirm that all potentially disclosive information has been redacted. We would like to be able to deposit anonymised interview transcripts in the UK Data Archive within a year of the project end date and request your consent to do this, below.

Your participation in the study would involve talking to a member of the research team for approximately one hour. If you are willing to take part in the study we would be happy to arrange a time to talk that suits your schedule. You are under no obligation to participate in the study. If you do decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time during the interview and for up to three months following the interview without giving a reason.

The proposed research does not have any obvious legal implications, but as with any study involving the collection of qualitative interview data there is a small possibility that you may disclose information about illegal activities. In this context it is possible that you may speak of actions that discriminate against groups that are protected by equalities laws. In the unlikely event that this occurs we will not pass on this information to the authorities. However, it is important to make clear that research data does not enjoy legal privilege and although unlikely, it could be subpoenaed by a court.

The study has received ethical approval from the School of Applied Social Sciences at Durham University and we are committed to following the standards for ethical practice in research set out by the British Educational Research Association and the British Sociological Association.

If you would like further information, please contact the project leader Professor Vikki Boliver ([vikki.boliver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:vikki.boliver@durham.ac.uk)) or Dr Mandy Powell ([mandy.powell@durham.ac.uk](mailto:mandy.powell@durham.ac.uk)).

Thank you.

**Consent Form**

It is important that only people who want to do so participate in this study. If you do want to participate, you should also be aware that you may withdraw from the study at any time during the interview and for up to three months following the interview.

*Please tick the box to indicate you agree with the following statements:*

1. The study has been explained to me
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to

withdraw from the research at any time during the interview and for

up to three months following the interview

3. I understand that my conversation with the researcher will be

audio recorded and used solely for transcription purposes, that the

transcribed interview will be fully anonymised, that I will be invited

to check that the transcript is accurate and fully anonymised,

and that once I have done so the audio recording will be destroyed

4. I understand that carefully selected extracts from my anonymised

interview transcript may be used for the final report written for the

Nuffield Foundation and for conference presentations, academic

Papers and other materials intended for the public domain

5. I agree that the anonymised interview transcription can be

deposited with the UK Data Archive (please delete accordingly) Yes/No

**I understand the above information and agree to participate in this study**

Participant signature Date

Researcher signature Date