**Social Connectedness at University**

**Study Sign-up Form**

**Researcher:**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr Sophie Homer, School of Psychology, University of Plymouth

**What is this study about?**

We are conducting online focus groups with students about experiences of university life, including personal and social experiences.

**What will happen during the focus group?**

During the online focus group, you will be asked about your social and personal experiences at university. You will be asked to consider your social connections, your social activities, and your engagement with others in and outside of university. You will also be asked about your perceptions of social connectedness and belonging, and, in relation to this, your perceptions and experiences of loneliness, isolation, mental health, and wellbeing.

The focus group will last no longer than one hour, and you will receive a £10 Amazon after participating. The Researcher will tell you how to claim your voucher at the end of the focus group.

**Will my participation in the focus group be anonymous and confidential?**

The study is a focus group, so the other members of the focus group will know that you are participating. However, we ask all focus group members to agree that they will not disclose other participants’ names, and that they will not discuss anything said during the focus group with anyone else afterwards. *Please keep in mind that you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and please only share things you feel comfortable to share within the group.* Your name will only be collected by the Researchers for the purposes of gaining informed consent.

Focus groups will be audio recorded. The Researcher will let you know when they are about to begin the recording. The recording will be stored on secure university systems (OneDrive) until it has been transcribed.

All focus group data will be transcribed and anonymised, meaning that we will remove all names and identifiable information (for example, if you happened to mention someone else’s name or the name of the street you live on). Transcription will be done by an external company, but this company will comply with GDPR and university regulations.

Once the recording has been transcribed, it will be destroyed. Anonymised transcriptions will be stored securely on University systems (OneDrive) for ten years in line with University policy.

We may want to disseminate the data and analysis, including specific quotes from the transcript. We may disseminate the research by publishing it in academic journals and presenting it orally and/or via poster at conferences and events, including both academic and public events. We will not publish or present names or any identifiable information, and it will not be possible to link any of the analysis, or any individual quotes, back to you.

**Is there any risk?**

You will be asked to consider your social and personal experiences at university, including your experiences of social connectedness, loneliness and isolation. You will also be asked about mental health and wellbeing in relation to these experiences. For some, these may be sensitive topics. There is no pressure for you to discuss these topics if you do not wish to. If this is the case, please inform the Researcher that you have chosen not to participate and / or leave the Zoom meeting. If you do choose to participate, *please keep in mind that you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and please only share things you feel comfortable to share within the group.* You can withdraw from the study at any time (see below).

**Can I withdraw?**

You may withdraw from the focus group at any time, without penalty. If you would like to withdraw, please inform the Researcher either verbally or via private chat. Alternatively, you can simply leave the Zoom meeting. If you would like to withdraw your data after the focus group, please inform the Researcher within two weeks.

**Will this affect my relationship with the University of Plymouth?**

No. Participation is entirely voluntary and participating (or withdrawing) does not affect your relationship with the University in any way. You can participate or withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relationship with the University or any staff, and without prejudice to any assessment of your academic performance.

**Who do I contact with questions or concerns?**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Researcher, [Researcher name], in the first instance [Researcher’s email address].

If you do not feel that your issue has been adequately resolved, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Sophie Homer: [sophie.homer@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:sophie.homer@plymouth.ac.uk)

If you still do not feel that your issue has been adequately resolved, you can contact the University of Plymouth, Faculty of Health: Medicine, Dentistry, and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at [FOHEthics@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:FOHEthics@plymouth.ac.uk) or on 01752 586992.

**I would like to participate in the focus group, how do I sign up?**

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you would like to participate in the focus group, please click below to find out how to register your interest.

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**Focus Group Sign-up Form**

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you would like to participate, we invite you to complete a short form to indicate your interest.

**What does the sign-up form involve?**

The form will ask you for your name and contact email address, so that we can contact you about the focus group. It will also ask you to provide some demographic information, such as your age, gender, course/discipline, and ethnicity (you do not have to answer these questions if you do not want to).

There is no reimbursement for filling in the sign-up form, and the form will take no more than 2 minutes to complete. If you participate in the focus group, you will receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

**Is the sign-up form anonymous and confidential?**

Please note that any demographic information you provide will be linked to your name and email address. However, your name and email address will remain completely confidential. This information will only be seen by the Researchers and will only be used for the purposes of the focus group. The information you provide will be stored securely on Gorilla until we have enough focus group participants. Once we do, we will remove it from Gorilla and store it on secure University systems (OneDrive). Once the focus groups are complete, we will anonymise the information you provided by removing your name and email address. We may want to disseminate this anonymised data by publishing it in academic journals and presenting it orally and/or via poster at conferences and events, including both academic and public events. We will not publish or present names or any identifiable information, and it will not be possible to link any of the data, or any individual quotes, back to you. If at any point you wish to withdraw your data, please contact us with your participation code (provided at the start of the form) and we will destroy your data. Please note that accepting payment for participating in the focus group does not negate your right to withdraw your data (either from the focus group or from this form).

**If I fill in the sign-up form, will I definitely get to join the focus group?**

No. We can only invite a limited number of students to join the focus group. If more students complete the sign-up form than we can accommodate in the focus groups, then not everyone who signed up will be invited to participate. In this case, we will review the demographic information provided on the sign-up forms to invite as representative and diverse a sample as possible.

**What happens after I fill in the form?**

If you are selected to join the focus group, you will receive an email inviting you to join and giving you further details. If you do not hear anything from us, please assume that you were not invited to join the focus group on this occasion (we will not be able to contact everybody to let them know either way).

**Can I change my mind / withdraw?**

Yes, at any time and without penalty. You can withdraw from the sign-up form simply by closing your browser window. If you wish to withdraw your data afterwards, please email us with your participation code (provided at the start of the form) and we will destroy your data immediately.

**Completing the sign-up form does not obligate you to join the focus group.** If you are invited to join the focus group, you can decline the invitation by emailing the Researcher.

If you do decide to join the focus group, you can withdraw from it at any time, as detailed on the Study Information Sheet.

**Will this affect my relationship with the University of Plymouth?**

No. Participation is entirely voluntary and participating (or withdrawing) does not affect your relationship with the University in any way. You can participate or withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relationship with the University or any staff, and without prejudice to any assessment of your academic performance.

**Who do I contact with questions or concerns?**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Researcher, [Researcher name], in the first instance [Researcher’s email address].

If you do not feel that your issue has been adequately resolved, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Sophie Homer: [sophie.homer@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:sophie.homer@plymouth.ac.uk)

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If you choose to complete the sign-up form, you will now be asked to provide your informed consent.

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**Focus Group Sign-up Form**

**Consent**

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you would like to register your interest in joining the focus group, please confirm the following:

[ ] I understand that the form will ask for my name, contact email address, and some demographic questions.

[ ] I understand that if I want to participate in the focus groups, I will have to provide my name and a contact email address, but I understand that I do not have to answer the demographic questions if I do not want to.

[ ] I understand that I can withdraw from the sign-up form at any time, without penalty, by closing my browser window.

[ ] I understand that completing the sign-up form does not obligate me to participate in the focus group, nor does it guarantee that I will be invited to join the focus group.

[ ] If I had any questions, they have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to:

[ ] My name and email address being linked to the demographic information I provide (this will only be seen by the Researchers for the purposes of the focus groups).

[ ] The information I provide being stored securely on Gorilla initially, and then on University systems (OneDrive) until the focus groups are complete, at which point it will be anonymised.

[ ] Anonymised raw data, including quotes, being reproduced, disseminated, and published (e.g. in presentations or journal publications).

Thank you very much for your time.

If you agree to all of the above and would like to complete the sign-up form to register your interest in the focus group, please click below:

CONTINUE

**Focus Group Sign-up Form**

Unique participation code: Please answer the following questions honestly, or in such a way that you will remember later. This code will allow you to withdraw your data should you wish to, once it has been anonymised.

What is the last letter of your first name?

What is the last letter of your surname / family name?

What is the month of your birth? (E.g. for September, use 09)

What is the first letter of your middle name? (If you do not have a middle name, use X)

Enter the code here: [ Text box ]

For example, John Peter Smith, born in January, would be: NH01P

Please make a note of this code now.

[ ] I would like to participate in the focus group about social connectedness at university

If ticked:

We are asking for your name and email address so that we can contact you about the focus group, if you are invited to participate.

Name: [ Text box ]

Contact email address: [ Text box ]

[ ] I confirm that I am happy to be contacted about the focus group.

[ ] I confirm that I am currently a university student.

The following questions are about you. If more students fill in this form than we can accommodate in the focus group, then we will review the information you provide to select a sample to participate. We are asking the following questions because we would like as representative and diverse a sample as possible, **but you do not have to answer a question if you do not want to.** If you do not wish to answer a question, please either skip it or select ‘I would prefer not to say’ from the options.

If you would like to participate in the focus group but do not wish to answer the demographic questions, please still click through to the end of the survey to view some information.

**What is your age?** [ Drop-down menu 18-99]

**How would you describe your gender?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] Female

[ ] Male

[ ] Non-binary

[ ] Other

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**What stage of study are you in?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] First year undergraduate

[ ] Second year undergraduate

[ ] Third year undergraduate (currently on placement)

[ ] Final year undergraduate

[ ] Postgraduate – Research

[ ] Postgraduate – Taught

[ ] Other

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**What are you studying?**

[ Free text ]

**What is your mode of study?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] Part-time

[ ] Full-time

**Which of the following best describes you?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] I live alone

[ ] I live with other students

[ ] I live with family

[ ] I live with my partner

[ ] I live with non-students who are not my family

[ ] Other

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**Do you commute to university?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

**How would you describe your ethnicity?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British

[ ] White: Irish

[ ] White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller

[ ] White: Any other white background

[ ] Mixed / multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean

[ ] Mixed / multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African

[ ] Mixed / multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian

[ ] Mixed / multiple ethic groups: Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background

[ ] Asian / Asian British: Indian

[ ] Asian / Asian British: Pakistani

[ ] Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi

[ ] Asian / Asian British: Chinese

[ ] Asian / Asian British: Any other Asian background

[ ] Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: African

[ ] Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: Caribbean

[ ] Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: Any other Black / African / Caribbean / Black British background

[ ] Other ethnic group: Arab

[ ] Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] No

[ ] Yes

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**Do you describe yourself as LGBTQ+?**

[ ] I would prefer not to say

[ ] No

[ ] Yes

(OPTIONAL) Is there anything you would like to add? [ Text box ]

**Where would you place yourself on the below scale, between 5 (Very socially connected and very satisfied with your social life) and 1 (Not socially connected and dissatisfied with your social life)?**

5 - I feel very socially connected and am very satisfied with my social life

4

3

2

1 – I do not feel socially connected and am dissatisfied with my social life

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**Thank you and next steps**

Thank you very much for completing this sign-up form to register your interest in the focus group about social connectedness at university. Please review the information below.

**Is the sign-up form anonymous and confidential?**

Please note that any demographic information you provided will be linked to your name and email address. However, your name and email address will remain completely confidential. This information will only be seen by the Researchers and will only be used for the purposes of the focus group. The information you provide will be stored securely on Gorilla until we have enough focus group participants. Once we do, we will remove it from Gorilla and store it on secure University systems (OneDrive). Once the focus groups are complete, we will anonymise the information you provided by removing your name and email address. We will use this anonymised data in our reports, dissemination, and publications, but it will not be possible to link it back to you. If at any point you wish to withdraw your data, please contact us with your participation code and we will destroy your data.

**Will I definitely get to join the focus group?**

No. We can only invite a limited number of students to join the focus group. If more students complete the sign-up form than we can accommodate in the focus groups, then not everyone who signed up will be invited to participate. In this case, we will review the demographic information provided on the sign-up forms to invite as representative and diverse a sample as possible.

**What happens now?**

If you are selected to join the focus group, you will receive an email inviting you to join and giving you further details. If you do not hear anything from us, please assume that you were not invited to join the focus group on this occasion. We will not be able to contact everybody to let them know either way, but we are extremely grateful for your interest in the study.

**Can I change my mind / withdraw?**

Yes, at any time and without penalty. If you wish to withdraw the data you provided today, please contact us with your participation code and we will destroy it immediately.

**Completing the sign-up form does not obligate you to join the focus group.** If you are invited to join the focus group, you can decline the invitation by emailing the Researcher.

If you do decide to join the focus group, you can withdraw from it at any time, as detailed on the Study Information Sheet. Please note that accepting payment for participating in the focus group does not negate your right to withdraw your data from either the focus group or this form.

**Who do I contact with questions or concerns?**

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**Help or advice**

If you would like help or advice regarding mental health, you should contact your GP. Some other points of contact:

University Student Services: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/counselling>

Mind Mental Health Charity: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) 0300 123 3393

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/> 116 123

**Thank you very much for your time!**