

Manchester Access Programme 2025/26 Research Evaluation Study - Focus Group Participant Information Sheet

As you have previously completed the Manchester Access Programme (MAP) you are invited to support our evaluation of the programme by sharing your experiences in focus groups scheduled to take place on campus in February and March 2026. These sessions will supplement research of the MAP 2026 cohort who are currently taking part in the programme. Audio recordings from these focus groups will be used to create anonymised transcripts, with any names or identifiable information removed, before dialogue is analysed to highlight key findings.

About the research

➤ **Who will conduct the research?**

The focus group will be carried out by the Principal Investigator, Jack Walker, Division of Student and Academic Services with support from other members of the Monitoring and Evaluation team within Access and Student Success.

➤ **What is the purpose of the research?**

This research will help the University to understand the impact of MAP for local pupils during their time in sixth form or college and if it has helped improve access to university for participants. We hope to engage undergraduate students who have previously taken part in MAP to improve our understanding.

➤ **Am I suitable to take part?**

We plan to gather the experiences of undergraduates from the University of Manchester who have previously completed the Manchester Access Programme. If you have completed MAP and are currently studying an undergraduate degree programme at the University of Manchester, you are eligible to take part.

➤ **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

We plan to publish the findings from our research in an academic journal and present the findings at conferences. A summary of our outcomes will also be presented in our annual Access and Student Success Impact Report. Those who take part will be forwarded any publications of the results from the study.

➤ **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check**

The Principal Investigator of this study and all supporting staff within the Access and Student Success, Monitoring and Evaluation team have completed an enhanced DBS check within the last two years.

➤ **Who has reviewed the research project?**

This project has been reviewed by The University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 1 and reviewed by Professor Steven Jones on behalf of the Manchester Institute of Education.

What would my involvement be?

➤ **What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

If you choose to take part, you will be invited to share your views about MAP and your transition to HE at an in-person focus group on campus at the University of Manchester. If you are interested, please contact the Principal Investigator (Jack.Walker@manchester.ac.uk), if you have not already, to book onto your preferred time slot. The facilitator will use a microphone and 'Audacity' to record the audio of the session. The audio file from the focus group will be transcribed by an external company who have signed a confidentiality agreement. This company will produce an anonymous transcript with all identifiable data, including names of people, places and schools or colleges removed before deleting the audio file. This transcription will be used when writing findings for the study and stored on a secure server for the 5 years after the length of the study.

➤ **Will I be compensated for taking part?**

As a thank you for taking part all focus group participants will be given a £20 Amazon voucher.

➤ **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you email the principal investigator to take part in a focus group, you will be asked to confirm consent virtually via a form and verbally at the start of the focus group. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been anonymised as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights. If you decide not to take part you do not need to do anything further.

We will use audio recordings of the focus groups to create a transcript with names of people, places, schools and colleges removed. You must agree to having the audio recorded for the purpose of transcription to take part in the focus groups. You are free to leave the focus group at any time if you no longer wish to take part—just let the facilitator know or quietly exit the room. You will have one month after the study to request your omission from the transcription of the audio, after this point the audio will be deleted and you will no longer be identifiable in the data, so it will not be possible to remove your contribution.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

➤ **What information will you collect about me?**

In order to participate in this research project, we will need to collect information that could identify you, called "personal identifiable information". Specifically, this study will use the following data.

- Name
- Gender

- Ethnicity
- Email address
- Degree programme

For focus group recordings, the facilitator will use a microphone and 'Audacity' to record the audio of the session which will then be used to take a transcription.

➤ **Under what legal basis are you collecting this information?**

We are collecting and storing this personal identifiable information in accordance with UK data protection law which protect your rights. These state that we must have a legal basis (specific reason) for collecting your data. For this study, the specific reason is that it is “a public interest task” and “a process necessary for research purposes”.

➤ **What are my rights in relation to the information you will collect about me?**

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example, you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings.

If you would like to know more about your different rights or the way we use your personal information to ensure we follow the law, please consult our [Privacy Notice for Research](#).

➤ **Will my participation in the study be confidential and my personal identifiable information be protected?**

In accordance with data protection law, The University of Manchester is the Data Controller for this project. This means that we are responsible for making sure your personal information is kept secure, confidential and used only in the way you have been told it will be used. All researchers are trained with this in mind, and your data will be looked after in the following way:

- You will be identifiable to other participants within the focus groups however, all participants will be briefed beforehand and asked not to disclose any of the experiences shared in the session.
- Personal data collected for administrative purposes and focus group data will be stored using a secure research data storage service with access limited to the principal investigator and M&E Team. All members of the M&E team who access the data must sign a confidentiality agreement.
- Any names of people, schools, colleges or places present in the audio recording of the focus group will be removed during transcription to preserve anonymity.
- Transcription will be completed using Lawson Hardwick 1st Class Secretarial Services, a provider recommended for transcription of research data by the Research Data Management (RDM) team, which is part of the Office for Open Research. Data will be handled in accordance with their [data policy](#). This company will complete a confidentiality agreement before receiving and handling the data.

- Access to audio recordings will be limited to the principal investigator, members of the Manchester Access Programme delivery team and Lawson Hardwick 1st Class Secretarial Services.
- The audio data will be deleted after transcription has taken place. The transcription will be saved securely.
- Data will become fully anonymised by the end of March 2026. After this point you will not be able to request the deletion of your data.
- No data will be transferred outside of the UK.
- The University of Manchester Research Data Storage Service (RDS) will be used to store the master copy of all data. RDS is [automatically replicated and backed up](#). Any recording, editing or transcribing will take place on University managed laptops through secure, password protected accounts. No data will be stored locally.

The study team at The University of Manchester will have access to your personal information and they will anonymise it as soon as possible. Your name and any other identifying information will be removed and replaced with an ID number. The research team will have access to the key that links this ID number to your personal information. Your consent form will be completed online, and a copy of your consent will be stored for 5 years using The University of Manchester Research Data Storage Service (RDS) for audit purposes. With your consent, we would also like to retain your contact details for 5 years in order to provide you with a summary of the findings for this study. If you provide consent for this, your details will be safely stored on UoM servers in a digital folder only accessible to the study team and used only for the purposes described above.

So that we can provide the shopping/Amazon voucher as a thank you for your time, your full name and email address will be shared with our Finance department who will send the voucher to you. Your full name and email address will be securely retained by Finance for a period of up to 7 years for audit purposes only and then destroyed. It will not be used for them for any other purpose.

At the end of the project, we will deposit a fully anonymised dataset in an open data repository where it will be permanently stored. We will use Figshare at the University of Manchester Library. Researchers at other institutions and others can access the anonymised data directly from the repository and use it for further research or to check our analysis and results.

Summary

	Audio data	Transcript
Personal data	The audio data may contain names of people, schools, colleges or places participants name in the focus groups.	The transcript will be fully anonymous with all names of people, schools, colleges and places removed.
Storage	The audio file will be stored using The University of Manchester Research Data Storage Service (RDS).	The transcript will be returned to the Principal Investigator of this project via a secure portal.

	Audio data will be transferred to Lawson Hardwick Secretarial Services for transcription via a secure portal one month after the final focus group has taken place. After this point participants will not be able to request their omission from the study as the audio will be used to produce an anonymous transcript.	The transcript will be retained on a secure University server for the length of the research and five years after using The University of Manchester Research Data Storage Service (RDS).
Retention	The audio file will be deleted within one month of the final transcript being produced. Lawson Hardwick will also delete the audio file within one month of transcription.	The transcript will also be retained permanently on Figshare an open data repository.

Potential Disclosures

If during our conversation you reveal any information which means you may be at risk of harming yourself or others, we will be required to break confidentiality in order to put you in touch with the correct support. This may involve signposting you to relevant support services, calling a family member or friend or calling emergency services.

Please also note that individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities may need to look at the data collected for this study to make sure the project is being carried out as planned. This may involve looking at identifiable data. All individuals involved in auditing and monitoring the study will have a strict duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant.

What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about this study, please contact the Principal Investigators Jack Walker or Steven Jones by email using the contact details below. If you wish to make a complaint to someone independent of the research team, this should be the RGEI Manager as listed below.

Contact details for complaints

If you have a complaint that you wish to direct to members of the research team, please contact: JACK.WALKER@MANCHESTER.AC.UK OR SJ@MANCHESTER.AC.UK

If you wish to make a formal complaint to someone independent of the research team or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact

The Research Ethics Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 306 8089.

If you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office about complaints relating to your personal identifiable information](#) Tel 0303 123 1113

Contact Details

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part, then please contact the researcher(s)

Name: Jack Walker

Email: JACK.WALKER@MANCHESTER.AC.UK

OR

Name: Steven Jones

Email: SJ@MANCHESTER.AC.UK