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Learning Futures
Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor Learning Futures
Western Sydney University
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Australia

Project Title: [Flexible Learning Experience Program of Research \(FLEX PoR\)](#)

Project Summary

Western Sydney University is a leader in the development of flexible learning strategies, where students can attend campus, learn online, or combine both modes to suit their learning style and circumstances.

The FLEX Program of Research aims to build a comprehensive understanding of flexible learning experience from the perspectives of staff and students at WSU. This includes exploration of a range of factors such as timing and choice of learning activities, teaching practices, relationship between discipline and teaching methods, students' academic skills, personal attributes, academic progression, engagement, demographics, and backgrounds. The findings of research projects will also inform professional development of staff at Western to improve the student experience and ensure that HyFlex modes of curriculum delivery and assessment are effective and fair.

You are invited to participate in this study conducted by the Office of the PVC Learning Futures. Your participation allows the FLEX Project Team to use this information from students on application and enrolment for university and during their studies at WSU. This information (such as age, gender, postcode and grades)—routinely collected by all universities—will be de-identified and combined and can then be used in academic research (such as journal articles and conference presentations), in addition to its traditional use in governmental reporting and accreditation. It is anticipated that there will be further subprojects under the FLEX Program of Research that will investigate specific teaching methods to inform curriculum development and enable academic staff to publish this research in academic journals.

Please be assured that no individual will be identified in any publication or report.

Benefits

Your participation in this research helps us to understand the factors that improve student support and success in university education. The results from this study will assist us in improving teaching methods, student retention and the quality of your learning experiences.



Publishing our research helps us ensure the high academic standard of our work.

Risks

No foreseeable risks or discomfort are expected for participants in this Program of Research and any subproject. Your responses will have no impact on your academic results or your relationship with WSU. All information will be de-identified prior to publication.

If at any stage you would like to speak to someone about your feelings and experiences of being a student, or receive support and advice on managing your life/study balance, you can access free and confidential student counselling provided by WSU. To book a face-to-face or online appointment:

- call 1300 668 370 (option 4 then option 1), or
- email counselling@westernsydney.edu.au

Publication of Results

No personal information will be revealed in any publication, and only general (combined) and de-identified information will be reported. The findings of the research may be published in research reports, academic conference presentations, journal articles and books. We will be retaining the information used in research publications for a minimum of ten years post publication.

Withdrawal from the Study

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you do choose to opt out, no further information will be collected, however, some information you may have supplied previously may be used in subsequent analysis.

For subprojects of this Program of Research, if you have not opted out, you may be contacted to request your participation in surveys, focus groups, or similar research activities. Subproject researchers must gain your explicit consent for participation, and you are not obliged to participate in these subprojects and may opt out at any time.

If you agree to participate in this program of research, you do not need to take any action. If you do not want to participate in this program of research or any potential subprojects, please click [here](#) - and click 'Opt Out' on the web page.

Information Storage and De-identification

Please be assured that only the central team will have access to the raw information



collected for this Program of Research. However, your information may be used in further transition, progression, and retention related projects for an extended period of time – for example, once the approval for FLEX has expired a new Program of Research will be sought that will include allowing researchers to access the eligible information collected under FLEX.

The information for this Program of Research will be stored securely for a minimum of ten years in password protected servers.

What will happen with my information if I agree to it being used in subprojects?

These subprojects will focus on the research on and evaluation of specific themes or programs of flexible learning at Western Sydney University. Only your data that is related to flexible learning and academic progress will be made available to researchers; the FLEX central team will only allow subproject researchers access to your information that directly relates to their subprojects. For example, a subject is offered in HyFlex format in one year, and subproject researchers wish to compare students' academic progress and satisfaction to those in previous years.

Subprojects that wish to collect any further information for you (such as your participation in a focus group) must obtain your explicit consent for your participation and will provide full details on what will happen to your information if you consent to be part of the subproject.

The researchers are asking that you agree to the use of your information (data) in this project and to agree to allow the data to be used in future research subprojects.

You are being asked to agree to your routinely collected and de-identified student information being used for research on transition, progression and retention at Western Sydney University.

Extended consent

When you agree to extended consent it means that you agree that your data, as part of a larger dataset (the information collected for this project) can be re-used in subprojects that are dataset (the information collected for this project) can be re-used in projects that are

- an extension of this project
- closely related to this project
- in the same general area of this research.

This request is in line with current University and government policy that encourages the

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re-use of data once it has been collected. Collecting information for research can be an inconvenience or burden for participants and has significant costs associated with it. Sharing your information with other researchers gives potential for others to reflect on the data and its findings, to re-use it with new insight, and increase understanding in this research area.

To enable the re-use of data, it will be held at the University in its data repository and managed under a Data Management Plan. The re-use of the data will only be allowed after an ethics committee has agreed that the new use of the data meets the requirements of ethics review. Only access demonstrably relevant and directly related to transition, progression and retention data will be allowed.

The researchers will allow this data to be used by other projects on flexible learning and teaching methods, or those in the general research area of student experience. To enable this re-use, your data will be held at the University in its data repository and managed under a Data Management Plan. The stored data available for re-use will not have information in it that makes you identifiable. The re-use of the data will only be allowed after an ethics committee has agreed that the new use of the data meets the requirements of ethics review.

The researchers want to keep the data for five years for possible re-use. After this time the data will be securely destroyed.

You are welcome to discuss these issues further with the researchers before deciding if you agree. You can also find more information about the re-use of data in research in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) – see Sections 2.2.14 - 2.2.18.

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>

Feedback or Complaints

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The protocol number is H14843.

If you have any other questions not covered by this Participant Information sheet or you have any issues/concerns regarding FLEX PoR, please contact START@westernsydney.edu.au or call (02) 9685 9877.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you

Attachment F: Participant Information Sheet — FLEX Program of Research

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may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research, Engagement, Development and Innovation office on Ph. +61 2 4736 0229, Fax +61 2 4736 0905 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this program of research, you do not need to do anything further. If you wish to opt out, please click [here](#) and click 'Opt Out' on the web page.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the FLEX central team at START@westernsydney.edu.au.