

## Participant Information Sheet & GDPR Privacy Notice

### Section 1 - Participant Information Sheet

Date: August 2021

Title of Study: **Unlocking Opportunity: Exploring the Policies and Practices of UK Universities for Applicants with Criminal Records**

Name of Researcher(s): Charlotte Brooks

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the research and participating in the survey. You can talk to others about the study if you wish.

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

A criminal record can refer to any interaction with the criminal justice system. For instance, fines, cautions, community sentences or prison sentences. Since the 2018 application cycle, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) no longer ask applicants to disclose unspent criminal records as part of the application process. Currently, little is known about how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have responded to UCAS' decision to remove the criminal records tick box. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge about whether universities are continuing to collect criminal records data, or if their processes and practices have altered because of the decision from UCAS.

This survey aims to understand how and why criminal records data is used in the higher education sector for admission to postgraduate and undergraduate degrees. This research will provide insights about the impact of a criminal record on access to higher education in the UK. Findings will contribute to broader debates related to widening participation to university and the consequences of having a criminal record on access to education.

#### **Why have I been invited?**

You are being invited to take part because you hold a senior admissions role at a UK University. I am inviting 143 individuals with a remit for overseeing UK university admissions departments to take part in this survey.

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

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet prior to completing the survey. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This would not affect your legal rights.

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

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a survey about your institutions' current policies and practices in relation to how criminal records information is collected and evaluated (if at all).

The survey will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete and is hosted on the Microsoft Forms platform.

Please do not worry if you do not know an answer to a question. You can either leave the question blank or select 'I don't know'. The survey does require you to provide the name of your institution. This is to help me as a researcher contextualise your responses and ensure I only have one response per institution. The name of your institution will be anonymised within any dissemination of the findings (i.e., I will state 'one university reported that'...., rather than 'the University of Nottingham stated'...). Similarly, the survey does ask for your job title. This data will be aggregated when the findings are published (i.e., I will use this information to highlight the types of job role of people completing the survey. I will **NOT** state 'The Head of Admissions from X University responded that...').

### **Expenses and payments**

Participants will not be paid an allowance to participate in the study.

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

The majority of response options within this survey are tick-boxes to minimise the time participants need to spend providing information. There is the option to provide your comments at the end of the survey should you wish to elaborate further.

Completing this survey may prompt reflection about your institutions policies and practices regarding people with convictions. Each question does have the option for you to select 'other' or 'don't know', if there is anything you are unsure about. Similarly, there is the option to skip questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Completing the survey may make you reflect on your own, or family and friend's experiences, within the criminal justice system. There are no questions that ask about your personal experiences. However, if you have been affected by the questions asked, please get in touch with either myself (contact details to follow), or the charity [Unlock](#), who provide specialist support and guidance for people with criminal records.

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

We cannot promise the study will help you, but the information we get from this study may help support universities with their criminal records policies in the future. The research may also

contribute to widening access and participation in higher education for people with a criminal record in the future.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to myself or my supervisors. You can also contact the School Research Ethics Officer. All contact details are given at the end of this information sheet.

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

I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence.

If you participate in the survey, the data collected for the study will only be looked at by authorised persons from the University of Nottingham who are organising the research. They may also be looked at by authorised people to check that the study is being carried out correctly. All will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do our best to meet this duty.

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept **strictly confidential**, secured within the University of Nottingham. Any information about you which leaves the University will have your name and address removed (anonymised) and a unique code will be used so that you cannot be recognised from it. Anonymised data may also be stored in data archives for future researchers interested in this area.

Your personal data (email address) will be kept for four years after the end of the study so that we are able to contact you about the findings of the study *and possible follow-up studies* (unless you advise us that you do not wish to be contacted). All identifiable research data will be kept securely for 7 years. After this time your data will be disposed of securely. During this time all precautions will be taken by all those involved to maintain your confidentiality, only members of the research team will have access to your personal data.

### **What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without your legal rights being affected. If you withdraw more than three weeks after completing the survey, the information collected may not be possible to extract and this information may still be used in the project analysis.

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

This research is part of my Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded PhD research. The findings from this research will contribute towards my doctorate qualification. Additionally, this research is being undertaken in collaboration with the charity Unlock. Unlock may use findings from this research to inform their 'Unlocking Students with Conviction' project.

In addition, findings from this project may also inform training sessions for university staff working in departments such as university admissions, student support and widening participation teams. The findings are also likely to be published in blogs (e.g. Wonkhe) and in academic journal articles. Individual institutions and participants will not be identifiable in any publications or within my thesis.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being organised by the University of Nottingham and is being funded by the University of Nottingham and the ESRC.

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

All research in the University of Nottingham is looked at by a group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee (REC), to protect your interests. This study has received a favourable ethical review by the School of Sociology and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee.

### **Further information and contact details**

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## Section 2 - Research Participant Privacy Notice

### Privacy information for Research Participants

For information about the University's obligations with respect to your data, who you can get in touch with and your rights as a data subject, please visit:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/utilities/privacy.aspx>.

### Why we collect your personal data

We collect personal data under the terms of the University's Royal Charter in our capacity as a teaching and research body to advance education and learning. Specific purposes for data collection on this occasion are to explore the current policies and practices of UK universities for applicants with criminal records.

### Legal basis for processing your personal data under GDPR

The legal basis for processing your personal data on this occasion is Article 6 (1e) processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest.

### How long we keep your data

The University may store your identifiable research data for a minimum period of 7 years after the research project finishes. The researchers who gathered or processed the data may also store the data indefinitely and reuse it in future research. Measures to safeguard your stored data include:

- The responses from the survey will be stored securely on the University of Nottingham One Drive.
- Data relating to the specific university and participants' job role, will be anonymised before any survey data is shared outside of the immediate research team. There will be no reference to specific institutions within the write up of this research.

### Who do we share your data with?

Extracts of your data may be disclosed in published works that are posted online for use by the scientific community. Your data may also be stored indefinitely on external data repositories (e.g., the UK Data Archive) and be further processed for archiving purposes in the public interest, or for historical, scientific or statistical purposes. It may also move with the researcher who collected your data to another institution in the future.