

Participant Information Sheet – Project ‘Exploring Economics’

Invitation

Your child is being invited to take part in a project called ‘Exploring Economics’, which has an outreach and a research component. The outreach part of this project is led by the Educational Engagement (EE) Team, which will organise events at various schools and a one-day event on campus (4th of July), both aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of economics and its real-world applications. The research part aims to explore factors influencing students' decisions to pursue economics education. This part is composed of two research components, (i) a survey that will be conducted at schools and (ii) focus groups that will take place on campus

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the **research** is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask your school teacher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish your children to take part.

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of our project is to understand the diverse motivations and considerations that contribute to the choice of studying economics among college students. Our survey will remain open until August 2024, and will be sent to different schools in Leeds. The focus groups will take place on campus on the 4th of July.

Why have I been chosen?

Participants for this study were selected from a pool of eligible schools that were directed by the Education Engagement Team from the University of Leeds. We aim that a total of 200 participants will be recruited to ensure a comprehensive exploration of factors influencing students' decisions to study economics.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if the student chooses not to participate. Please indicate your consent for your child's participation in the **survey** by ticking the designated box in the consent form, indicating that you have read the information provided and consent your child to take part in the study.

Although parents may give consent for their child to participate in both studies, students can still withdraw at any time without giving us a reason before their answers are submitted. They will be advised that once they click ‘submit’ we can no longer delete their response as it cannot be identified.

Students are welcome to attend the outreach activities held on campus (limited spaces available). Attendance at this event on the 4th of July does not obligate them to participate in the focus groups. Please indicate your consent for your child's participation in the **focus groups** that will take place during the on-campus outreach activities by checking the designated box in the consent form. Students can withdraw at any time without giving us a reason. While these sessions will not be recorded, notes may be taken. As the comments and answers are anonymous, it may not be possible to delete statements provided by the students. For this part of the research, there will always be in the room a researcher and a teacher to support the students.

What do I have to do?/ What will happen to me if I take part?

Both the survey and the focus groups involve a series of questions about your child's professional aspirations and students should answer them as accurately as possible. It

should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey. The focus groups should take between 30 to 45 minutes, with 6-12 participants each. To ensure that all students who wish to participate have the opportunity to do so, there may be several rounds of focus groups. Each student may only participate in one round of focus groups to allow for a broader representation of perspectives. This approach aims to include as many students as possible in the discussion while ensuring that each participant has an equal chance to contribute. During the focus group sessions, other simultaneous activities will be available for students who do not have parental consent to participate, choose not to participate, have already taken part, or are awaiting their turn for the focus groups. Students will have the autonomy to decide their participation status at the time of the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

While participation in the **survey** is designed to be non-intrusive, it is important to note that potential disadvantages may include the risk of discomfort associated with answering questions related to your child's professional decisions and prospects for the future.

Regarding the **focus group**, despite efforts to maintain confidentiality, participants may feel uncomfortable sharing personal experiences or opinions in a group setting, particularly if they fear judgment or repercussions from peers or authority figures. The research leader will emphasise that students may choose not to answer the questions asked. Another risk is related to social pressure. Students may feel pressured to conform to the opinions of others in the group, leading to biased responses or a reluctance to express dissenting views.

Similarly to the survey, discussions about sensitive topics or personal experiences (e.g. career aspirations) may evoke emotional responses, causing discomfort or distress for some participants. We advise students who did not participate in the survey to carefully consider their participation in the focus group.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Participating in the survey and/or focus groups can offer several potential benefits for students. First, students have the opportunity to voice their opinions, perspectives, and experiences related to economics, allowing them to contribute to discussions that may impact decision-making processes within their educational environment. By actively participating in the research process, students may feel empowered and valued as stakeholders in their educational community, recognizing their ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions and decision-making processes.

Second, engaging in focused discussions can provide students with valuable insights and new perspectives on various issues, helping them to develop critical thinking skills and broaden their understanding of complex topics. Third, students can enhance their communication and interpersonal skills through active participation in group discussions, including the ability to articulate their thoughts effectively, listen to others' viewpoints, and engage in constructive debate. Finally, students' input and perspectives gathered through focus groups can inform the development of educational policies, programs, and initiatives, ultimately contributing to positive changes within the school or academic institution.

Use, dissemination and storage of research data

The data collected in this research will be used for analysing factors influencing students' decisions to study economics. Dissemination of the findings will be in aggregated and anonymized form, ensuring the confidentiality of individual responses. All research data will be securely stored and retained in compliance with ethical guidelines, with access restricted to the research team to maintain confidentiality and privacy. The results of our research may be published in academic journals and available to the public.

What will happen to my personal information?

Student's personal information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will only be used for the purposes of this research. It will not be disclosed to any third parties, and any published results will be presented in an aggregated, anonymized format to ensure the student's privacy. Participants are not identifiable. All personal data will be securely stored and retained in accordance with the University of Leeds ethical standards, with access limited to the research team.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

All the contact information that we collect about students during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the research data. As participants are not identifiable, the research data will remain always anonymous, so that students will not be identified in any reports or publications.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

Please explain here.

Who is organising/ funding the research?

Leeds University Business School (LUBS).

Contact for further information

For more information, please read the [Privacy Notice for Research](#). Further guidance is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/involvingresearchparticipants> and at <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/information-for-researchers>.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to read through the information sheet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of the members of our research team:

Dr Bianca Orsi, B.Orsi@leeds.ac.uk

Dr Peter Hughes, P.T.Hughes@leeds.ac.uk

Dr Juliane Scheffel, J.Scheffel@leeds.ac.uk