Workshop for Ethics Reviewers in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Professional Services – 24 June 2013

Application 5: The path less travelled: Academically able students who don’t progress to university

Important note: This is a real application which has been doctored for the purposes of training. Information has been removed from the application and the application has been anonymised. The UREC does not endorse this application as a model.

The application, shown on the following pages, was discussed at the workshop. A summary of the key points raised by the participants and the UREC follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

- There is nothing in the information sheet to state that participants can withdraw from the research.
- There is nothing in the information sheet stating if the participant’s involvement in the project will be kept confidential or how the data will be stored/who will have access to it.
- The consent form asks for consent for the data to be used in future research but this isn’t mentioned elsewhere in the application.
- The application doesn’t mention who will be conducting the interviews – will this person have a CRB check?
- It should be considered that participants may feel coerced into taking part as they are asked to do so by their teacher.
- It should be considered if consent should also be sought from the parents of those under the age of 16 and from the teacher.
- The questionnaire asks ‘what does your father/male carer do as their main job?’ and ‘what does your mother/female carer do as their main job’ – the researcher may wish to use more gender neutral language in order to be inclusive to participants whose parents are same sex, or who may only have one carer.
- The information sheet should make it clear that the researcher has been CRB checked (if this is the case) and that a teacher will be available if needs be.
- The information sheet should tell the participants where the interviews will take place.
- The information sheet should confirm participants’ confidentiality and state how long records will be kept for.
- Where participants answer ‘not sure’ to questions about their progression and educational future on questionnaires or in interviews, what support will they be offered? Alternatively, if participants respond that they do not intend to progress to University as a result of personal barriers or negative influences what specific support will they be directed towards?
This form should be completed by any member of Student Services staff who intends to undertake a project that involves human participants, personal data or human tissue. The form consists of 4 parts:

**PART A: Basic details form**: requests key identifying information about you and the project.

**PART B: Pre-ethics review form**: it is recommended that this part is completed to assist you in deciding whether your project constitutes research and needs to be ethically reviewed.

**PART C: Ethics review form**: this part MUST be completed if your project constitutes research and requires ethical review.

**PART D: Risk assessment checklist**: it is recommended that this part is completed to assist you in identifying whether your research project needs to be ethically reviewed via the LOW RISK or HIGH RISK ethics review procedure.

**How do I arrange for my project to be ethically reviewed?**

If your project DOES constitute research and needs to be submitted for ethical review, arrange for the project to be ethically reviewed according to either the LOW RISK or HIGH RISK procedures outlined below. The form should be accompanied by any information sheets/covering letters/written scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a consent form where you need to use one; for guidance on the informed consent process, refer to Research Ethics Policy Note No.2:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent).

If your project is classed as ‘LOW RISK’ it will be reviewed by the nominated person within your Section:

- Email the completed form, together with other documents where applicable, to the nominated person within your Section; and
- Sign and date **Annex 1** of this form and provide a paper copy to the nominated person.
Important note for the nominated person:
Following the ethics review the nominated person who has reviewed the application must provide the Student Services’ Ethics Administrator with a copy of the this research ethics application that s/he reviewed, a copy of the ethics reviewers comments form which s/he completed in relation to it and confirmation of the final ethics decision. The Ethics Administrator reserves the right to consult the Chair of the Student Services Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) if s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.

If your project is classed as potentially ‘HIGH RISK’ it will be reviewed by three reviewers from the Students Services Ethics Review Panel:
• Email the completed form, together with any supporting documents where applicable to the Student Services Ethics Administrator; and
• Sign and date Annex 1 of this form and provide a paper copy of it to the Student Services’ Ethics Administrator.

ADDITIONAL NOTE FOR PROJECTS THAT WILL BE REPEATED ON A REGULAR BASIS:
If you intend to run the same project on a regular basis (e.g. annually), then a single ethics approval will be necessary; please tick the box on the right-hand side of this page to indicate if this is the case. However, please note that if significant changes are made to the project in future, then re-approval may be required. Applicants should refer to section 3.1.8 of the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ for further guidance: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/changes-made-after-approval
A1. Title of Research Project:

The path less travelled: Academically able students who don’t progress to university

A2. Project leader:

Title: ***
Post: ***
Email: ***

Name: ***
Department: ***
Telephone: ***

A2.1. Other key investigators/co-applicants (within/outside University), where applicable. Please list all (add more if necessary):

Title: ***
Post: ***
Email: ***

Name: ***
Department: ***
Telephone: ***

Title: ***
Post: ***
Email: ***

Name: ***
Department: ***
Telephone: ***

A3. Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: ***
End date: ***

A4. Briefly summarise:

i. The project’s aims and objectives:
(this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

The changing higher education context, particularly the increasing costs of study, may have shifted the focus from university entry for some young people. Whilst the reasons for the recent drop in student numbers are contested, it is likely that there are a large number of students not progressing to university today who you might have ordinarily expected to do so in the past. Of course, there will always have been students who don’t go on to university, even though they may be appropriately qualified. But it is the fall in student numbers which has brought increasing attention to those who are qualified, but are not progressing to university.

It therefore seems important to explore further what characterises this group of students and how they make sense of their educational and career paths. Are this group of students not convinced by what they see as the benefits of HE study? Are the increased tuition fees perceived to be a price too high to pay? Or are they viewing other educational and career routes as more attractive options? How do these young people make sense of their decision making? These are important questions for public policy, particularly in light of institutional strategies aimed at widening participation in HE study. Of course HE is not for everybody, and some young people may not desire to progress or feel they are suited to further study. What more do HEIs need to do to convince and inform them of the benefits of HE study?
The key research questions explored in this study are:

- What characterises those young people who are academically able, but do not progress to university?
- How do qualified young people who choose not to enter university make sense of their decision?
- How do they conceive of their future educational and career trajectories?

ii. The project’s methodology:

The primary method of data collection will be interviews. These will be lightly structured, based around thematic guides, which aim to capture the young person’s perspective. They intend to allow the young person to put things in their own words and talk about the things which matter to them rather than any predetermined issues the researcher may bring. Therefore, the interview situation will be weakly framed.

The study will follow two different age cohorts as they are at the cusp of making a key decision about their educational futures. A short questionnaire will be administered to all students in each cohort, which will be used to identify interview participants. The questionnaire will collect data on students’ qualifications, predicted attainment and intentions in terms of their post-school destinations.

**Year 11 cohort (aged 15/16)**

This study will follow the last cohort of students who are legally able to leave compulsory schooling at age 16, prior to the raising of the participation age from the Summer of 2013 to age 17.

The interviews with these students will focus on several broad themes. One of the themes will centre around how the young people conceive of their educational and career aspirations. Another important area will be to look at their perceptions of university, in terms of the student identity, what happens at university, the benefits of degree level study and the costs of study.

Data will be transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis will be used to understand the experiences of students.

**Year 13 cohort (aged 17/18)**

The second cohort this study will follow are those who did progress on to a post-16 course of study. The course of study which they are following and their levels of attainment might typically allow them access to university. There are likely to be many young people each year who fit this criteria and do not progress to university.

Semi-structured interviews will take place with young people who have not made an application to university by xxx and have expressed a desire not to do so, despite being appropriately ‘qualified’. 
This part of the form, whilst not part of the University Ethics Review Procedure itself, has been recommended by Student Services and the UREC in order to assist staff in identifying whether their project constitutes research and therefore requires ethical approval.

**B5. Project classification**

Please read each of the following definitions and select the relevant definition for your project.

[Definition of research taken from the University of Sheffield 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue'. Definitions of audit and service evaluation from King’s College London.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of project</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Tick if applies to your project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>‘Research’ includes all investigation undertaken in order to acquire knowledge and understanding, across the full range of academic disciplines, from the arts and humanities to the natural sciences (whether funded or not), and also encompassing administrative research undertaken within, or on behalf of, professional services departments. Research which involves human participants, personal data or human tissue requires ethical approval.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Audit is defined as assessing the level of service being provided against a set of predetermined standards. This generally involves analysing existing data with results usually being used/distributed locally in order to effect change to improve/change the level of service currently being provided. Audit does not require ethical approval.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service evaluation</td>
<td>Service evaluation is undertaken to benefit those who use a particular service and is designed and conducted solely to define or judge current service. Your participants will normally be those who use the service or deliver it. It involves an intervention where there is no change to the standard service being delivered (e.g. no randomisation of service users into different groups). Service evaluation does not require ethical approval.</td>
<td></td>
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**Note regarding projects classed as audit or service evaluation:**

Such projects do not require ethical approval. However, these projects may still present ethical issues which should be considered. Particular attention should be paid to projects which will involve particularly vulnerable participants – whether directly, or in terms of personal data about them – and/or which address highly sensitive topics (for further guidance refer to section 3.1.4 of the Ethics Policy: [www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/assessing-risk](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/assessing-risk))

**Note regarding projects that cannot clearly be classed as research:**

Some projects may fall into a grey area which cannot be classed as service evaluation or audit, but for which it is not clear whether they should be classed as research either – for
such projects, the default position is that they should be treated as research for the purposes of ethical review, UNLESS you can provide a clear justification for why the project should not be classed as research.

If you are providing a justification for why this project should not be classed as research, please do so in the space below:

What should I do now?

If the project is classed as research – Ethical review is required; please complete Parts C and D of this form, and the declaration at Annex 1. Submit the form for ethical review according to the LOW RISK ethics review procedure (within the Section) or the HIGH RISK ethics review procedure (by Panel) (see guidance on the cover page of this application form).

If the project is classed as service evaluation or audit, or if you have provided a justification for why the project should not be classed as research – Ethical review is not required. Please complete the declaration at Annex 1 (you are not required to complete Parts C and D of this form). Email the form and provide a signed, hard copy of ‘Annex 1’ to the Student Services Ethics Administrator. You should also keep a record of this form.
Part C - Ethics Review Form

Please complete this part of the form if your project is classed as research and requires ethical review.

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’, as shown on the University’s research ethics website at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

C6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to participants?

This is likely to be limited.

There may be a small risk that interviews may involve some discussion of family or educational background and / or the availability of personal support.

Applicants will be verbally reassured at the beginning of the interview and on the consent form that they are not under any obligation to answer any questions they are not comfortable with.

Guidance will be provided to the interviewers regarding the procedure to be followed should any interviewee become distressed during the interview. As all of the interviews will be carried out in school, a teacher will be on hand at all times. Should an interviewee become distressed during the interview a teacher will be called up on to assist and support the student.

C7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

We do not anticipate that any aspects of the research raise any issues of personal safety.

If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

C8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

Questionnaire survey
The entire cohort (years 11 and 13) in each case study school will be surveyed.

**Interviewees**

The interviewees will be identified based upon their levels of attainment and intentions in terms of their post-school destinations – this data will be collected from the questionnaire survey.

**ii. Approached?**

They will be approached through four case study schools.

**Questionnaires**

Form tutors in years 11 and 13 will hand out the questionnaires to their form groups.

**Interviews**

They will be recruited via teachers in the individual schools. After the students have been selected, teachers will speak to the students and try to arrange the interviews.

**iii. Recruited?**

See above

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C9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

Yes [x] No  

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why.  Further guidance is at: [www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent)

C9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:

How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

The process of gaining informed consent is as follows.

**Questionnaires**

Participants will be given an information slip, which indicates that we will view completing the questionnaire as consent being given. If the participant does not wish to give consent, we will request that they return the questionnaire with a line struck through to indicate that consent is not given.

**Interviews**
The selected participants will be given an information sheet (attached) which includes details on the project. In addition to informing participants about the aims of the project, this information sheet will inform them about how all the data collected will be anonymised, stored securely, and destroyed after use. Participants will be asked to take the information sheet away and spend time considering whether they wish to take part in the study. If they wish to do so, they will then be asked to sign a consent form (attached) indicating that they have understood the details about the project and have consented to take part.

Remember to attach your consent form and information sheet (where appropriate)

C10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

Personal data which is in paper form will be stored in a secure, lockable cabinet. Data which is in electronic form will be stored on the project leader’s network storage space and only the project leader will have access to this.

C11. Will financial/in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

We do not intend to offer in kind payments to participants. However, if it is difficult to recruit participants we may do so. In this case, a £10 gift voucher will be offered to those who take part in the study.

C12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

YES  X  NO

C12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:
How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

The interviews will be recorded for the purposes of transcribing them verbatim. After the interviews have been transcribed the recording of the interview will then be destroyed. Until it is destroyed it will be stored in a secure place. This information will be included in the participant information sheet – which participants will be asked to read and consent to.

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes
**Part D - Risk Assessment Checklist**

It is recommended that you complete this part of the form to assist you in identifying whether your research project needs to be ethically reviewed via the LOW RISK ethics review procedure (within the Section) or the HIGH RISK ethics review procedure (by Panel). The risk assessment checklist should be considered as a guide to aspects of a project which may be risky, but should not be considered a complete list. If you are in any doubt about the level of risk posed by the project, you should consult the nominated person within your Section to agree an appropriate level of risk.

Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research involves:

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<tr>
<th><strong>People whose competence to exercise informed consent is in doubt</strong>, such as:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• infants and children under 18 years of age;</td>
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<td>• people who lack mental capacity;</td>
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<td>• people who suffer from psychiatric or personality disorders, including those conditions in which capacity to consent may fluctuate; and</td>
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<td>• people who may have only a basic or elementary knowledge of the language in which the research is conducted.</td>
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<th><strong>People who may socially not be in a position to exercise unfettered informed consent</strong>, such as:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• people who depend on the protection of, or are controlled and influenced by, research gatekeepers (e.g. school pupils, children and young people in care, members of the armed forces, young offenders, prisoners, asylum seekers, organisational employees);</td>
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<td>• family members of the researcher(s); and</td>
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<td>• in general, people who appear to feel they have no real choice on whether or not to participate.</td>
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<th><strong>People whose circumstances may unduly influence their decisions to consent</strong>, such as:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• people with disabilities;</td>
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<td>• people who are frail or in poor health;</td>
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<td>• relatives and friends of participants considered to be vulnerable;</td>
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<td>• people who feel that participation will result in access to better treatment and/or support for them or others;</td>
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<td>• people who anticipate any other perceived benefits of participation; and</td>
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<td>• people who, by participating in research, can obtain perceived and/or real benefits to which they otherwise would not have access.</td>
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<th><strong>Potentially highly sensitive topics</strong>, these may include:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘race’ or ethnicity;</td>
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<td>• political opinion;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• religious, spiritual or other beliefs;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• physical or mental health conditions;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• sexuality;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• abuse (child, adult);</td>
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<td>• nudity and the body;</td>
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<td>• criminal activities;</td>
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<td>• political asylum;</td>
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<td>• conflict situations; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• personal violence.</td>
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If a box has been ticked against any of the above statements, or if you feel that the project should be classed as **potentially high risk** for any other reason, you should now follow the ethical review procedure for HIGH RISK research. The project will be reviewed by three ethics reviewers from the Student Services Ethics Review Panel (see guidance on the cover page of this application form).

If no boxes have been ticked against any of the above statements then the project can be classed as **low risk** and should now follow the ethical review procedure for LOW RISK research. The project will be reviewed by the nominated person within your Section (see guidance on the cover page of this application form).
Annex 1 - The Signed Declaration

Title of Research Project:
The path less travelled: Academically able students who don’t progress to university

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s ‘Financial Regulations’, ‘Good Research Practice Standards’ and the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

• The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
• The project will abide by the University’s Ethics Policy, where necessary.
• There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
• Subject to the research being approved where required, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
• I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol, should ethics approval be required (by contacting the Student Services Ethics Administrator in the first instance).
• I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).
• I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
• I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the University Ethics Review Procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

Name of the project leader:
***

Signature of the project leader:
*** Date: ***

What should I do now?
Submit the application form for ethical review according to the LOW RISK ethics review procedure (within the Section) or the HIGH RISK ethics review procedure (by Panel) (see guidance on the cover page of this application form).
**How to Fill In This Questionnaire**

There are two types of questions on this questionnaire:

- Some questions have a box for you to write in. Please give us your opinion....
- Other questions ask you to colour in a blob with a pen or pencil to indicate your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Eg. To agree</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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### Personal Information

**Your First Name:**

**Your Surname / Family Name:**

**Date of Birth:** (dd/mm/yyyy)

**Your Gender:**

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<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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**Home Postcode:**

Please give us your unique learner number (ULN) if you have it:

**Your Email Address:**

We would like to contact you after the activity to ask you to take part in a survey. Everyone who takes part will be put into a draw for a £50 voucher. Please colour in this blob if you would NOT like us to contact you in future:

- O

### What are you planning to do after school?

**School/College Year:**

- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- Other

### Have any of your close family studied at university before?

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
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### What does your Father / male carer do as their main job (please put unemployed or retired if they're not working):  

### What does your Mother / female carer do as their main job (please put unemployed or retired if they're not working):  

### Section 1 – About your future plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you expecting to achieve at least 5 A* - C grades in your GCSEs?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Are you expecting to achieve A* - C grades in English, Maths and Science?</th>
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<tr>
<th>Do you talk a lot to your parents/guardian about what you want to do after school?</th>
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<th>Would you say you have spoken to teachers a lot about what you want to do after school?</th>
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<th>Do you think you will go to university at some point in the future?</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do you think going to university is too expensive?</th>
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You are being invited to take part in an interview. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the interview is taking place and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

The Project
The University of Sheffield is researching young people’s choices and decision making about what they want to do after school. We want to find out more about the kinds of choices young people are making and why. This will help us in the future to understand the kinds of information young people might need in order to make their choices.

Why have I been chosen?
You are being invited to take part in an interview because you have been selected from completing the short questionnaire some time ago.

What is the interview about?
The interview will be a guided discussion between a researcher from *** and yourself.

The discussion will last approximately one hour. We will suggest topics to talk about – these will include what your thoughts are on what you would like to do after school, your perceptions of university, what information or skills would help you decide what you want to do, what support you already get and any other support you would like.

You do not need to talk about anything you prefer to keep private.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?
Yes. All the information that we collect about you during the interview will be kept strictly confidential.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The discussion will be transcribed and then analysed as part of the research activities. Key themes and ideas and perhaps even parts of the discussion may be used to write a number of research reports. You will not be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications.

Who is supporting and authorising this research?
This research is being carried out by the University’s ***. The outcomes of the research will be reported to *** to relevant staff across the university. Some of this research may also be written up for external publication.

This project has been approved by the *** Research Ethics Review Panel.

More information or complaints?
If you would like more information about, or have a concern or complaint about the project or this interview, please contact ***
Consent form

Name of Researcher:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [insert date] explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).

3. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

________________________ ________________         ____________________
Name of Participant Date Signature
(or legal representative)

_________________________ ________________         ____________________
Name of person taking consent Date Signature
(if different from lead researcher)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

_________________________ ________________         ____________________
Lead Researcher Date Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.