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### *DIRECT VOICE*

*Building stronger networks for stronger university cultures.*

“By giving HDR students a Direct Voice into key decision making areas of Academic Governance, how do the perceptions and attitudes of HDR students change in regard to the University Culture and their place within the University Community?”

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

### What is this study about?

**By being a part of this three-phase study, you will be given the opportunity to have your voice heard directly in one of the key the decision-making committees of the University. You will be invited to give immediate feedback on current decisions that directly impact HDR students. You will also be given the opportunity to express your opinions about the University of Sydney culture and community, as part of the on-going creation of this University.**

The *Phase 1 - Baseline* and *Phase 3 - Change* questionnaires are aimed listening to how HDR students feel about the university culture, decisions that affect their academic experience, and their academic environment. These pre and post questionnaires are essentially “taking the pulse” of the HDR student body by gauging student perceptions and attitudes.

In *Phase 2 – DIRECT VOICE* you are given the opportunity to input your opinions directly into the senior decision-making forums of the University for a trial term of four months. The researcher will be liaising with the University Executive to bring questions from them to you, and then to feedback your opinions to them before they make decisions that will impact HDR students. You may engage in two, three, or four of these DIRECT VOICE feedback events to remain in the overall study and be included in the final *Phase 3 – Change* survey.

Participants in this study will be given the opportunity to express their considerations on potential or implemented changes arising from the governance of the University that directly impact the HDR experience. Your opinions on proposed changes to HDR processes, scholarships, grants, review processes and other issues that directly affect you, will be aggregated and the analysed

results will be communicated directly into the University Executive area that makes these decisions. The UE committee will take the student feedback into consideration when discussing decisions to be made. This is not direct democracy but rather direct representation of your opinion. For example, in March you will be asked your opinion about substantial proposed changes to the Postgraduate Support Scheme (PRSS).

You do not need to be available in person to participate. If you have an internet connection and are a CURRENT HDR student, then you can be included. **Registration for this study will close on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017.** After this date, no further participants will be admitted to the study. You must take part in all three parts of the study for your opinions and feedback to be included in the final analysis. You also need to participate in at least two of the four **Direct Voice** feedback events to be included in the final analysis.

### What will the study involve for me?

Each online questionnaire should take you less than 10-15 minutes to complete; unless you choose to provide extra comments in the optional feedback boxes at the end of each section, in which case it may take a little longer.

The *Phase 1 - Baseline* and *Phase 3 - Change* questionnaires are aimed at hearing your opinions on;

- Your inclusion into the decision-making processes at the university that affect you;
- Your participation in the creation of your academic environment;
- Your feelings about the shared culture of values (as stated in the Strategic Plan)
- Your connection with the University Community.

### The *Phase 2 - DIRECT VOICE* pilot project; run in four parts

This middle phase of the study is being run in collaboration with the University Executive – Research & Education Committee (UE-RE). All three phases are being conducted by the researcher, Rebecca Johnson, as part of her study for a Master's thesis. This pilot project will consist of four feedback events; run from June to November 2017. You will be asked your opinion about key issues under discussion in this Executive Committee that month. The Committee will submit questions to the Researcher about topics such as changes to scholarships, review process, thesis submission processes, or other issues that directly impact your experience as a HDR student, the researcher will in turn code and distribute these questions to the study participants. This is your chance to tell the people in the decision-making areas what you think and what you want to see happen. Each feedback should take less than 10 minutes of your time and you only need to do that twice out of the four events (although you can engage in all four if you wish). The aggregated feedback of the student voices will then be fed back to the Uni.Exec. committee for consideration when they are making their decisions.

**To remain a part of the whole study you need to engage in at least two of these DIRECT VOICE feedback events.** Only people that have registered by **15<sup>th</sup> June 2017** and completed the baseline questionnaire can take part in this unique pilot project.

These aggregate results are used in discussion by the UE-RE committee when making their decision on this topic. The student voice is considered in the decision-making process. The student voice is not a form of Direct Democracy, rather it is Direct Representation of voice, opinion, and

perspective. The ultimate decision on the issue is made by the committee from a more informed position.”

To complete the feedback loop, decisions made by the UE-RE, and how the HDR **DIRECT VOICE** was included in the discussion of the UE-RE, and how it impacted their decision-making, will be fed back to the participating students by way of the HDR-AC newsletter.

Participating in this three-phase study enables you to have a **DIRECT VOICE** into key decisions being made about the your HDR experience by University Governance committees. This is an opportunity to give your opinion directly on how scholarship programs, review processes, submit process, travel grants, and other HDR issues, will run at this University.

Whilst it is possible to only engage in phase 1 and 2 of the study and have your opinions heard by the Uni Exec in relation to the specific issues over the four months of the **DIRECT VOICE** pilot project, if you take the time to engage in the final phase 3 of the study your over-arching opinions about student voice will be included in the final analysis.

#### By submitting this questionnaire, you consent to the following:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study as stated above.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that my questionnaire responses cannot be withdrawn once they are submitted.
- ✓ I understand that this is a three-part study and should I not engage in all three phases, all my feedback may be withdrawn from the final analysis.
- ✓ I understand that I must participate in at least two of the four **DIRECT VOICE** feedback events for all my opinion to be included in the final analysis.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me. My comments may be quoted but any identifying remarks will be removed and I will only be quoted in a non-identified manner.
- ✓ I understand that providing my name, email and SID information is solely for the purpose of the researcher to track the study and ensure only currently enrolled HDR students participate. My personal details will never be revealed to the University Executive Committee and will only be seen by the researcher and Chief Investigator.

If you would like to be considered for additional input into this study beyond the three phases, you may indicate your wish on the final questionnaire.

#### Who is running the study?

This research is being conducted by Rebecca Johnson as part of a Masters by Research Thesis in the department of Media and Communication, School of Letters Arts and Media, in the Faculty of Arts. The supervisor and Chief Investigator is Dr. Alana Mann.

Phase 2 of the study, *Direct Voice*, is supported by the University Executive – Research & Education Committee, chaired by Deputy Vice Chancellor of Education, Professor Philippa Pattison and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research, Professor Duncan Ivison. However, the Committee is not conducting the research, they are liaising with the researcher to provide appropriate questions and consider the feedback. The DIRECT VOICE pilot project is being run entirely by the researcher. The Committee is not privy to any identifying information about participants; also, it is removed from the larger study including Phase 1 and 2.

### Who can take part in the study?

All participants must be current HDR Students at the University of Sydney.

### Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney. Once your questionnaire is submitted it cannot be withdrawn. Should you not participate in all three phases of the study your opinions and feedback may be removed from the final analysis.

### Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

All responses from HDR students will be de-identified when being presented to the UE-RE committee and in any published work. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to identifying data. It is the researcher's belief that, aside from giving up your time, the risks involved in participating in this study are extremely low to negligible.

- All data will be stored on the secure Research Data Storage space to which only the researcher has access. This data will be kept for five years then destroyed.
- You will be de-identified in reports to the UE-RE committee and in any published work.

### Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study. However, your input may contribute to the development of an HDR environment that is reflective of the desires of HDR students. Additionally, your participation may help build a stronger culture of shared values at the university and a collective HDR voice on the state of this culture and how it is impacted by the 2016/20 Strategic Plan. More importantly, your voice and your opinions about proposed changes to HDR programs, scholarships, grants, performance review processes etc., will be heard directly in the Governance forums that make these decisions.

### What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to the researcher collecting demographic information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement. Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identified in these publications.

- Information may only be discussed with the supervisors of the research; as Chief Investigators to the study, supervisors also guarantee your privacy in accordance with the University of Sydney *Research Data Management Policy 2014* and the *Research Data Management Procedures 2015*.
- An open, shared database will NOT be created.

We will keep the information we collect for this study, and we may use it in future projects within the next five years. By providing your consent you are allowing us to use your information in future projects, if these are conducted by the researcher before 2021. We don't know at this stage what these other projects will involve. We will seek ethical approval before using the information in these future projects.

### Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about this study.

### To Register.

**To register head to DirectVoice.Sydney between 1<sup>st</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017.** Participation in this research study is voluntary and anonymous.

### Will I be told the results of the study?

Feedback will be made available on the USYD – MECO website when the study is finished and will be in the form of *one-page lay summary*.

### What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney **Protocol number 2017/157**. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study per the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

#### **The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:**

**Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176

**Email:** [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au)

**Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)