Participant Information Sheet
**Disabled Tertiary Population Survey Focus Groups**

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| Invitation to participate in Focus Groups |

You are invited to take part in the focus groups for the Disabled Tertiary Population Survey project.

These focus groups are open to all learners currently enrolled in some form of tertiary education (University, wānanga, polytechnic, work-based learning, adult community education etc.) who identify as disabled, deaf, chronically ill, neurodivergent, having a mental illness, or having an impairment. A broad term of disability and identity is being used for this project, disclosure and proof of disability is not required for participation and will not be asked for in focus groups.

You do not have to take part in this study, participation is completely voluntary.

Before you take part in this study, 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. You may wish to talk about the study with others such as friends, family, whānanu, and support people. You are free to do so.

If you agree to participate in the focus groups, you will be asked to sign the Consent Forms before you join an online focus group or at the start of your in-person focus groups.

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| Background Information |

Early in 2023, the National Disabled Students Association (NDSA) approached the Ministry of Education to address a lack information about disabled tertiary learners. The last source of reliable information was from the 2013 Census and had a quantitative data focus. Up to date and balanced data is important for creating better, effective, and evidence-based policy to better serve disabled tertiary learners.

A working group was formed including representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the NDSA, with the NDSA as project leads.

The project has included a literature review and a survey, which was open from July 19th-August 16th 2023. The next step, which is relevant to this invitation, is a series of focus groups which will run from the September 13th-30th. The focus groups are open to all currently enrolled disabled tertiary learners. Focus group participants do not need to have completed the earlier survey.

The project will conclude with a report, expected to be published in early 2024.

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| Purpose of the Study |

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the lived experiences of disabled learners currently enrolled in tertiary education in Aotearoa. This will then provide qualitative evidence that can be used to create a tertiary education sector that better serves the needs and successes of disabled learners.

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| What Will My Participation in the Focus Groups Involve? |

Your involvement in this project would include participating in one focus group kōrero with other disabled learners facilitated by members of our research team from NDSA and the Ministry. The main topic of focus for these focus groups will be on your lived experiences as a disabled tertiary learner engaging with the tertiary sector.

If you decide to participate you will attend an in-person focus group which is estimated to take up to three hours or an online focus group which is estimated to take up to two hours, you are encouraged to attend which ever focus group is more accessible and convenient for you. There will be in-person focus groups in Ōtepoti Dunedin, Ōtautahi Christchurch, Pōneke Wellington, Te Papaioea Palmerston North, Tauranga, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and four online focus groups.

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| Will My Responses Be Recorded?  |

None of the online or in-person focus groups will be audio or video-recorded. During the focus groups the co-facilitators will take notes during the sessions by writing in notebooks or electronic devices like laptops. These notes will be anonymised and will have identifiable information removed. The notes/data will be destroyed within 180 days.

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| Will My Involvement in this Project Be Confidential? |

All the information that is shared via data through the survey, and during focus groups will be kept confidential. Raw data will only be analysed by a small group of analysts in the Ministry of Education. No names will be used during note taking of the focus groups or in the report, all information will be anonymous and all identifiable information will be removed. There is always the chance in research though that if someone reads something they might be able to identify you or make assumptions when reading the report if they know you. We will remove as much information as possible to mitigate this.

As is in the consent form, we ask and expect all participants to not share information that other participants in the focus group shared.

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| Are There Possible Disadvantages and/or Risks in Taking Part? |

We understand that both positive and negative experiences could be discussed in these sessions. Due to that, there is a chance that if a negative experience is voluntarily disclosed it may cause distress. If you are participating in focus groups, you are welcome to bring a support person with you, and you are free to withdraw from the focus group or take a break at any stage. These focus groups will be supportive environments.

As mentioned earlier, we will anonymise information and do our best to remove all identifiable information. However, with all research it might be possible for some people, such as close relationships, to identify or make assumptions if reading the report.

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| What are the Possible Benefits of Taking Part? |

We hope that you find the experience of participating in the focus group interesting. The benefits of participating in this focus group is that by participating you are informing policy to create a better, more effective, and fit-for-purpose tertiary education system for all disabled learners.

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| What Will Happen to the Results of the Research Project? What Happens if I Change My Mind?  |

The results from the survey and the focus groups will be analysed and then used to form the basis of a report that the National Disabled Students Association and Ministry of Education will work on. This report will be used to provide evidence on the lived experiences of disabled tertiary students and to better inform policy decisions and frameworks to improve the tertiary education sector for disabled learners.

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| Withdrawing information  |

You are free to change your mind about participating at any time. If you have already participated in a focus group, we will do our best to withdraw any contributions you have made. It may be difficult to completely extract contributions, however, if they have been incorporated into the discussion by other participants.

Please let us know if you wish to withdraw from the project within 7 days of the focus group you have participated in.

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| Are There Incentives, Reimbursement or Koha for My Participation? |

No, there is no incentive, reimbursement or koha for participants in the focus groups. For the in-person focus groups water and some kai will be provided.

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| Ethical Review of the Study |

This Ministry of Education Ethics Advisory Group have reviewed this project.

They can be contacted by email at Ethics@Education.govt.nz

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| Further Information |

Lead Investigators: Ash Beales (National Disabled Students Association), Kate MillsWorkman (Ministry of Education), Zianna McLeod (Ministry of Education)

You can contact Kate and Zianna from the research team at DTPS.Mailbox@education.govt.nz if there is anything that is not clear, you have any issues or would like more information.