

Information Sheet for Parents

Study title

Engaging Students for their Maths GCSE

Principal researcher

The principal researcher is Dr Laura Nicholson (Edge Hill University). If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to get in touch via email, Laura.nicholson@edgehill.ac.uk, or telephone, 01695 657277. All members of the research team have been DBS checked.

Invitation

Your child is invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide whether you wish for your child to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the information that follows carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please inform the researcher (details above) if you would like more information or if anything is unclear. If you do not wish for your child to take part, please inform your child's school. Otherwise, parental consent will be assumed.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research will investigate relationships between the way in which students studying for their GCSE maths exam (i) interpret messages about the exam given by their teacher, (ii) anticipate various emotions prior to their exam, (iii) engage in their maths lessons, and (iv) perform in the exam itself. The study will be conducted over two years in which questionnaires will be completed by approximately 2,000 students at three points in time.

Why has my child been invited?

We are recruiting ten secondary schools in the north-west of England to this study.

What will my child be asked to do?

Year 10 students will complete a survey about how they interpret teacher messages, their attitudes towards their GCSE maths exam and their engagement in maths class at three points in time over two years (March 2019, October 2019 and March 2020). Questionnaire completion should take no more than 15-20 minutes at each time point and will take place in a classroom. Students' Year 9 maths achievement and eventual GCSE maths grades will also be collected from the school (via GCSE candidate numbers). We will also conduct short interviews (5-10 minutes) with two students from half of the participating schools, in which they will be asked about their experiences of teacher messages, how they interpret them and the emotions they feel regarding their GCSE maths exam. The interviews will be audio-recorded.

Consent

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there will be no detriment should you wish for your child to not take part. Your child will be asked to provide consent on every occasion that they complete the questionnaire. It is important that students can exercise a choice over their participation and do not feel obligated to participate.

Can I or my child withdraw consent?

If students complete the questionnaires (or interviews) and then later change their mind, they can tell their teacher within three months and we will withdraw and destroy their data.

Will my child's participation be confidential?

All information provided by students will be anonymous and treated with the strictest confidence. Their responses will not be seen or discussed by anyone at school. We will not ask students to put their names on the questionnaires. In order to match up the data from the questionnaires with Year 9 and GCSE maths grades, however, we will ask students to provide their GCSE candidate number. This will be stored in our database, along with their questionnaire data.

Audio recordings and data from interviews will be stored on password-protected files. In the unlikely event that any unlawful activity is disclosed during data collection, it will be reported to the appropriate authority.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings will be written up for publication in academic journals and shared at conferences. We also aim to share our research more widely with both the academic and educational communities via various media releases. Once again, be assured that your child's identity will be protected.

All data will be kept for a period of 10 years; electronic data in password-protected files and hard copies of questionnaires in a locked filing cabinet.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at Edge Hill University.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Disadvantages and risks are minimal. It is important to emphasise that our aim is to aggregate responses from many classes and schools to obtain an overall picture of the types of messages that teachers give about GCSE maths and how students interpret them. Data from individual teachers, classes or schools will not be identified in any of the outputs from the research.

If students display emotional distress when discussing their GCSE maths exam, we will empathise and give them the time and space to talk freely. We will provide them with details of Childline and advise them to get in touch, if necessary.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your child will be contributing to research which, over the long-term, aims to reduce any negative psychological effects of testing on students.

On completion of the study, we will run a dissemination workshop for all participating schools based on the findings from this study and our previous work in the field. We will also produce a resource pack that we will offer free to all EHU partnership secondary schools, based on the contents of the workshop.

Is there someone independent I can talk to about the research?

If you wish to raise any queries or concerns about the ethical dimension of this project with an independent person, please contact the secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee (Research@edgehill.ac.uk).

Data protection legislation & the lawful basis for processing personal data

Any personal data collected as part of this project will be processed for the purpose of this research. At Edge Hill, we are committed to respecting and protecting your personal information. The University is committed to ensuring compliance with current data protection legislation and confirms that all data collected is used fairly, stored safely, and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully. The University is a data controller and, in some instances, may be a data processor of this data. To find ways in which we use your data, please see edgehill.ac.uk/about/legal/privacy.