

Navigating Student Life

Participant Information Sheet

Tēnei te mihi matakuikui kia koe, Greetings to you

We are a group of researchers from the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at the University of Auckland. We are interested in exploring how the transition to university life impacts students' health and wellbeing.

Before you decide whether to participate in this research, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it involves. This Participant Information Sheet will help you make a fully informed decision on whether you participate.

Please take some time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Once you understand what the research will involve, and if you agree to take part, you can sign the online consent form using the link or QR code in the recruitment materials. By signing the consent form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you consent to participate in this research.

What is the purpose of the study?

Starting university is a time of major life change, which can disrupt students' eating habits due to new living situations, time pressures, financial stress, and academic demands. These challenges can lead to poor diet quality and food insecurity, which negatively affect students' physical and mental health, as well as their academic success. Universities have an important role to play in promoting healthy eating and food security, and effective solutions must be informed by students themselves. However, there is currently no research in Aotearoa exploring these life changes and how students can be best supported through these. This study aims to understand how the transition to university impacts students' diets and access to food, so we can help develop practical, student-informed programmes that support wellbeing and success.

Who can take part in the study?

We aim to recruit 25 participants for this study. You can take part if you meet the following criteria:

- You are enrolled as an undergraduate student at the University of Auckland
- You live in Aotearoa, New Zealand
- You are willing to attend a focus group or individual interview

What does the study involve?

There are several parts to this study, each described in more detail below.

Screening form

You will be asked to answer a few questions to check if you meet the inclusion criteria and to provide some background information about yourself (e.g., gender, ethnicity, living situation, etc.). Submitting the consent form and screening questions does not mean you will automatically take part in the study. Your name and contact details will be added to a waiting list, and the research team will be in touch with you if you are eligible and selected to participate. Participants will be selected to ensure a mix of backgrounds and experiences so that the study findings reflect a range of perspectives.

If you are invited and are still interested in participating, the research team will send you a link to the online survey and arrange a date and location for the focus group or individual interview to take place. If you are not selected from the waiting list, you will be notified about this using the contact details you provided. All details and data related to you will be deleted.

Survey

You will be asked to answer a few more questions about yourself, your studies, your health, and food security. This will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Focus group or individual interview

During the focus group or interview, we will talk about your experience of starting university, healthy eating, and food security. We would also like to know your thoughts on what possible university-based initiatives could support you and other students to eat well and be food secure. We expect this to take no longer than 1 hour.

The screening questions and survey can be completed using a digital device connected to the internet. The focus group and individual interviews can be held either in person or online (using Zoom). You can discuss these options with the research team.

The in-person sessions will be audio recorded using a recording device. For the interviews and focus groups held online, Zoom recordings will include both voice and video recording. We will ask you to turn on your video to simulate an in-person setting that stimulates conversation. Video recordings will only be used to further assist with transcriptions of the focus groups, helping to identify which participant said what. Once transcriptions have been completed, video recordings will be deleted.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part in this study?

While you may not experience immediate personal benefits, your participation will help build a clearer understanding of the challenges faced by students during the first year of university. This study gives you a chance to share your ideas on how universities can better support healthy eating and food security. This research could lead to better support systems, policies, and future initiatives that improve student wellbeing, nutrition, and academic success.

You will be thanked for your contribution to the survey and focus group/interview by receiving a \$30 Woolworths voucher. You can also enter a prize draw of three times \$50 Woolworths vouchers. The entry form will be provided to you after the focus group or interview session. You will be prompted to leave your name and email/postal address so we can contact you if you are successful in winning one of the vouchers. Contact details will be deleted once the prize winners have been contacted.

We do not anticipate any risks to you by participating. However, if you do experience difficulties or stress at any point during the study, you are encouraged to talk to a family member/friend or contact the research team (details below). Support resources for University of Auckland students can be found on the Auckland University Students' Association website: <http://ausa.org.nz/support/>. If required, counselling is available by free call or text to 1737.

What are my rights as a participant?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary (your choice), and your decision to take part will not affect your relationship with the University of Auckland and your opportunity to participate in future research studies in any way. Neither your grades nor your academic relationships with the

department and members of the research team will be affected by either refusal or agreement to participate.

Withdraw from participation and withdrawal of data

You can withdraw from the study at any time before or during the survey, your individual interview, or focus group session without giving a reason. In an individual interview, we can stop the audio recording whenever you wish, and any data you shared can be removed. For focus group sessions, however, we are unable to stop the recording partway through, and any contributions made up to that point can't be withdrawn, as this would affect the overall context and meaning of the group discussion.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Due to the nature of the recruitment and study design, data collected will not be anonymous. However, all identifiable information provided to the research team will be treated with respect, and your identity will be kept strictly confidential. After signing the consent form, you will be assigned a participant code (e.g., P1, P2, P3), which will be used instead of your name when recording your answers. This means that your data will not be linked to any identifiable information. Access to the consent forms will be restricted to the research team. Research assistants, students, or statisticians may be hired to support the research team with the data collection and/or analysis. They will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure the privacy and security of all participant information.

We will need to collect your contact details (name, phone number, and email/postal address) for the purpose of signing the consent form and discussing the next steps. We will also use this information to provide you with a survey link, a calendar invite to the focus group or interview session, a prize draw link, and to receive a copy of your interview transcript and a summary of the results (if indicated on your consent form). Contact information will be stored separately from any other data collected and will not be used after completion of the study, unless you indicated that you would like to be invited to future research projects. In this case, we may use your personal details (e.g., name and email address) along with some of your responses (e.g., about your age, gender, food security level) to identify if you meet the eligibility criteria. This helps us avoid sending you an invitation to a future study that is not relevant to you. Future projects may include research related to similar topics or building on the findings from this study.

Reviewing your transcript

If you choose to participate in an individual session, you may request on your consent form to have a copy of the transcript of your interview sent to you to review. For confidentiality reasons, this is not possible if you participate in a group session. If requested, we will send your transcript via the email or postal address that you provide, and you will have two weeks to let us know if you would like to amend or withdraw any parts of what you said during the interview.

How will my data be stored?

Several online platforms will be used to collect and store data, including REDcap and Zoom. REDcap is a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases that will host the survey. It complies with all privacy and security regulations. When the focus group or interview is held online, the video and voice recording will be directly saved on the online Zoom cloud after the Zoom meeting ends. For in-person sessions, audio will be recorded using a recording device. Only the research team will have access to your responses and recordings on REDcap and Zoom via a secure log in.

Following completion of the study, raw data will be extracted from these online platforms and digital devices for analysis and storage, and then deleted from these platforms and devices after data analysis is completed. Audio recordings will be transcribed using Vibe, an offline transcription application that uses AI models. Vibe will be installed and run locally (offline) on a University-managed computer/laptop, and no data will be available to the internet (e.g., Vibe defaults to processing the audio on the computer without sharing data with the internet, sending data to a cloud server, or other third parties). This software has been approved by the University of Auckland.

All study data will be kept securely on University of Auckland-owned servers using password-protected computers. Data will be stored for at least six years from study completion, after which time the data will be deleted.

What happens after the study?

After all data has been collected, the information will be analysed and summarised. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, you can indicate this on the consent form. The results of the study may be disseminated through scientific journals, student dissertations, brief reports, and/or presented at conferences. No information that could identify you will be included in these results or publications.

Who do I contact for more information or if I have concerns?

We appreciate the time you have taken to read this information. If you have any questions, please contact:

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For Māori health support, please contact **He Kamaka Waiora** (Māori health services) by phoning 09 486 8624 x 2324.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, Office of Research Strategy and Integrity, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz

**Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Committee on
05/09/2025 for three years. Reference number UAHPEC29862.**