

Study title:**The relationship between masking and burnout in autistic university students****Invitation**

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the way that autistic students experience masking and burnout. Before deciding whether to take part, please read this information sheet carefully.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between masking and burnout in current or previous autistic students.

What's involved?

If you consent to participate, you will be invited to a one-on-one interview either on Microsoft Teams or in-person on the RGU campus or the campus at a different university that you attend. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes - 1 hour. You will be asked questions about: your experiences of masking, your experiences of stress or burnout and how these relate to university and, if relevant, part-time work. The audio of the interview will be recorded so that the researcher can produce a transcript to analyse.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you are a current or previous autistic student and are over the age of 18.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary. You may also stop the interview at any time and choose not to answer certain questions.

What if I want to withdraw from the study?

You have the right to not answer all of the questions in the interview. You may choose to withdraw from the study for any reason and your data will be deleted, however this may not be possible after 01/03/2026 as data analysis will be underway.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks to taking part?

The interview may be time consuming; it will last between 30 minutes to 1 hour, however you can choose to shorten it at any point. There is a minor possibility that discussing your personal experiences of burnout, stress, or masking may make you feel upset or uncomfortable. You do

not have to answer all questions and you may pause or stop the interview at any time. After the interview is conducted, you will receive a Debrief sheet that will contain contact details for helplines and support services if you have been affected by the topics that have been discussed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The study is unlikely to benefit you personally, however it will assist in furthering research and understanding of how masking contributes to burnout, especially in autistic students.

How will my information be kept confidential?

The data will be stored on an RGU account that requires a password and authentication processes such as Microsoft Authenticator. After the audio recording of the interview is transcribed and anonymised, the audio will be deleted. Anonymisation will be done by describing you by a code such as "Participant 1" in the transcript and any identifying information that you share during the interview will be redacted or also coded. Your data will be processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be stored for 2 years and afterwards it will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of the study will be used in the write up of a research project for the SS4006 Dissertation module for fourth year BA HONS Applied Social Sciences. If the findings are presented in a presentation or a journal article, all data from you will remain anonymous. The transcriptions from the interviews will be used in the write up of the research project, however they will use pseudonyms and no identifying details.

What happens next if I do decide to take part?

If you choose to take part, please contact the researcher through the email provided to arrange an interview time.

Who has reviewed this study?

It has been reviewed and approved by the Applied Social Sciences Dissertation Ethical Review Panel in the School of Law and Social Sciences at RGU.

Further information and contact details

You may contact the researcher or alternatively the research supervisor if you have any questions or would like further information.

Researcher contact details: Marta Koltowska, m.koltowska@rgu.ac.uk

Research supervisor contact details: Dr Katrina Forbes-McKay, k.e.forbes-mckay@rgu.ac.uk, +44 (0) 1224 262000