

**Project Title:** *University Transition of International Students in Canada: A Qualitative Case Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Frank Boers, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University.

**Co-Investigator:** Ridha Ben-Rejeb- PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, Western University.

## **Letter of Information**

### **1. Invitation to Participate**

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study conducted by Ridha Ben-Rejeb with the principal investigator Prof. Frank Boers entitled “*University Transition of International Students*”. You are invited to participate in an optional online recorded interview over Zoom, which will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Alternatively, another option besides the online Zoom recorded interview, you may want to provide written responses to the interview questions and submit them in a study project webpage hosted on Western University Learning Management OWL site created specifically for this study. You have been selected as a potential participant because you were previously or are currently an international student in an undergraduate program at a Canadian university, and you have also successfully completed an Intensive English Language Program in Canada prior to starting first year university. The researcher acknowledges that your time is valuable and appreciates your participation.

### **2. Purpose of the Letter**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you need to make an informed decision about whether or not you would like to participate in the study. Because it is important that you understand what the research involves, please take time to read this document carefully and ask questions if anything is unclear. Feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have about this study at any time. You can save this Letter of Information and Consent for your own records.

### **3. Purpose of this Study**

The present research study is designed to explore the university transition experience of non-English speaking background international (NESBI) students from an Intensive English Language Program to mainstream study programs at Canadian universities. The inquiry focuses particularly on identifying language skills, strategies and resources that enhanced students’ university transition and success. In addition, the study will investigate the role of program instructors and directors for enhancing international students’ language learning and university transition experience. It is hoped this study will benefit higher education stakeholders to understand the necessary support needed for international students to access and succeed at Canadian postsecondary educational institutions.

### **4. Eligibility**

Participants in this study must meet the following criteria:

- Non-English Native-speaking international students (referred in the study as NESBI students) whose first language is not English and are 18 years of age or older.
- Currently registered in an academic program at a Canadian university or graduated from a study program at a Canadian university.
- Have successfully completed one or more terms in the Intensive English program in Canada prior to starting core studies at a Canadian university.

- You consent to voluntarily participate in a digital recorded interview or submit written interview responses to the OWL site project created specifically for this study entitled “*University Transition of International Students*”.

## 5. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked whether to take part in an online recorded interview over zoom, which will take approximately one hour to complete.

Alternatively, you may opt for providing written responses to the interview questions on Western University OWL project site, you will be asked to provide a preferred email contact to [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca), so you can be added to the list of study participants who will have access to the online project site called “*University Transition of International Students*”, on Western OWL learning management Site. Prior to taking part in the Zoom recorded interview or written interview responses option, you will be asked to sign and submit the attached consent form and return it to the researcher Ridha Ben-Rejeb [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca). Email arrangements will be made between you and the researcher to determine your preferred time and mode of interview. You will have the opportunity to a member check in case you want to corroborate your responses after conducting the recorded Zoom interview by contacting the researcher at [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca) and request a transcription of your responses. Member check for the submitted written responses option can also be accessed via OWL account and site for reviews and changes.

## 6. Possible Risks and Discomforts

There are no major known risks of distress, physical and psychological discomforts or inconvenience as a result of participating in this study, except for the time you spend taking part in the interview. However, minor vulnerabilities may emerge, since we ask you to recall a past experience when you started your first-year university that could lead to remembering some challenges or uncomfortable experiences. Therefore, you do not have to share any details if you are uncomfortable doing so, nor will you be prompted to do so. Furthermore, you are not required to answer any uncomfortable questions, and you can choose to skip them. Please note that because we are collecting personal identifiers mediated by online media communication in the forms of Zoom and OWL site, there is always the risk of a privacy breach over the internet by unauthorized persons hacking the system or the risk of identifiable data being disseminated by accident on the internet to outside sources. While the researchers do not anticipate any issues stemming from the interview questions, the aforementioned risks stemming from using internet-based media of communication cannot be completely eliminated. We prefer that participants have prior knowledge about the interview, so they make an informed decision about their participation in the study.

## 7. Possible Benefits

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, you will be sharing your perceptions and opinions that may benefit the scientific community and society. The research study would also greatly benefit from your input and participation as you will be providing Canadian higher education stakeholders with a better understanding of international students’ university transition needs, effective teaching strategies and successful learning gains, which may lead to improvements in services and supports available to you and prospective international students. Eventually, this study will provide valuable data to faculty and English language program educators and management about what is perceived as useful learning activities and strategies in

classroom settings. Your responses may generate further improvements to the language and academic readiness programs for international students in Canada and elsewhere.

## 8. Compensation for Participation

There is no compensation for your participation in this research. However, the researcher highly values and appreciates your contribution and insights.

## 9. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is **VOLUNTARY**. If you choose not to participate, stop participating, not answer a specific question(s), or withdraw from the entire study at any time, you may do so without having to justify your decision. Any decision you make will not disadvantage your academic standing. Your participation in this study will not affect your ability to participate in future research studies. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to the consent form herein.

## 10. Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity of Submitted Information

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. To protect the identity of participants, a master list will link all participants with identifiers/identifiable information such as full name and email to a unique participant code in the form of a pseudonym. Any identifying information in the study findings or a participant's direct quotes will be removed and replaced with pseudonyms in the transcripts of the recordings and in all published reports of this study. The data set and master list will be stored in a university encrypted drive. It is important to note that a record of your participation must remain with the study, and as such, the researcher may not be able to destroy your signed letter of information and consent, or your name on the master list. However, all data will be non-identifiable and private.

As a participant you do not waive the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Any data may be withdrawn upon your request in writing to [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca). However, withdrawal of data cannot be guaranteed without some limitations like in Zoom recorded interviews as the server is hosted in the cloud. For written responses, the research team cannot guarantee that all deleted data will be permanently erased from the virtual OWL website as information on the internet cannot be completely eliminated. The research team would like to make you aware of these limitations and security risks.

Collected data, along with master list, will be encrypted and password protected and will remain in a locked cabinet separate from the study data within the boundaries of the university premises on campus for the entire time of the study. When the study is completed, all research data will be discarded, electronically deleted from the server seven years after the publication of the research as per the Western University Ethics Research Policy (Electronic data will be erased and hard copies will be shredded).

If the results are published, participant names and any identifying information will not be used and will be replaced with non-identifiable pseudonyms including any published direct quotes from the interviews. If you choose to withdraw from this study interview at any stage upon your request by emailing [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca), your data will be removed and destroyed from the database irretrievably. Participants in the study will have their e-mail addresses securely stored on the Western University server. To minimize any risk of security breaches and to ensure confidentiality, the researchers recommend that participants use standard safety measures such

as signing out of accounts, closing browsers and documents, and locking screens and devices when no longer in use, especially when the study interview is completed.

Zoom will be used for conducting online recorded interviews. Zoom has undergone a technology risk assessment by Western Technology Services and has had its contract and security components inspected under TRAC typical due diligence. Zoom was reviewed by Western TRAC in early 2019 and has undergone a more comprehensive review process. Since the time of the review, the contract between Western University and Zoom was negotiated to satisfaction; however, it is important to note that the agreement is restrictive and prohibits the sharing of personal information to third parties unless authorized by the Western University. The Zoom platform is adequate in terms of encrypting data in transit. Zoom does not maintain a registry of Western University credentials such as participants' usernames and passwords. Please note that for Zoom meetings, if any individual (internal or external of Western University) has the Zoom link for a session, they will have access to the Zoom meeting. Please be aware of who is needed to attend the Zoom meeting and the content that will be shared.

For more information about Zoom privacy statement, data collection, process and sharing, please visit <https://zoom.us/privacy> and

<https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-Security-White-Paper.pdf>.

For more information about Zoom recorded meetings, please visit

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360040771752>.

To follow up and monitor the conduct of the present research, representatives of Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact participants to require access to study-related records.

## 11. Contacts for Further Information

If you require further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, you may contact Prof. Frank Boers, Tel. (519) 661-2111 x 88392, [fboers@uwo.ca](mailto:fboers@uwo.ca) or the student researcher: Ridha Ben-Rejeb, Tel. (613) 890-2016, email [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca). If you have any further questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may also contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

## 12. Publication

If the results of the study are published including any published direct quotes from the interview, neither your name nor any identifiable information that could compromise or disclose your real identity will be used.

## 13. Consent

You are requested to fill out the consent form before taking part in the interview. If you have any further queries, please contact Ridha Ben Rejeb at [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca). Completion of the interview, either audio-recorded over the zoom or written option, is voluntary.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference and records*

## Study Interview Consent Form

**Project Title:** University Transition of International Students

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Frank Boers Tel. (519)661-2111 ext.88392- [fboers@uwo.ca](mailto:fboers@uwo.ca)

**Co-investigator:** Ridha Ben-Rejeb [rbenreje@uwo.ca](mailto:rbenreje@uwo.ca)

**Statement of disclosure:** I have read the letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and **I agree to participate**. All questions were answered to my satisfaction.

***Please initial one of each of the options below:***

### 1. Recording the interview

☐ **YES**, I consent to having my interview recorded over the Zoom.

☐ **NO**, I do not consent to having my interview recorded over the Zoom.

### 2. Transcription of interview

☐ **YES**, I consent to having my recorded Zoom interview transcribed into written format by Ridha Ben-Rejeb.

☐ **NO**, I do not consent to having my recorded Zoom interview transcribed into written format.

### 3. Use of Transcriptions

☐ **YES**, I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during my interview in the dissemination of this research.

☐ **NO**, I do not consent to the use of my interview in the dissemination of this research.

### 4. Contact for Future Member Checking

☐ **YES**, I agree to be contacted to review and verify my interview data for accuracy.

☐ **NO**, I do not agree to be contacted in the future for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Print Name of participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

DD/MM/YYYY  
**Date**

**My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above.  
I have answered all questions.**

RIDHA BEN-REJEB  
**Print Name of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

DD/MM/YYYY  
**Date**