



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate
research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

EMPLOYER SURVEY

IMPROVING 'ROUTES OUT' SUPPORT FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

THAT'S ME!

**ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS**

A Survey for Employers and Participant
Information Sheet
21 June 2025

Published by
BCU

That's Me! is funded by UKRI and The Office for Students



Research
England

Office for
Students



CONTENTS

FIELDWORK DESIGN

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Data protection privacy notice

CONSENT FORM

EMPLOYERS SURVEY

i

1

4

5

6

Name of Fieldwork Activity:

Routes Out Employer Survey

Content of the Activity:

Research Statement (50-100 words):

As part of the Routes Out action research activity, this survey seeks to gather information from the That’s Me! Employer Board. The aim is to develop understanding of how employees undertaking doctoral qualifications are supported and the perceived benefits and challenges of doctoral level study. That’s Me! supports those from Global Majority backgrounds; therefore, we are specifically interested in collating information for this group.

Contribution to project outputs: Confirm outputs in the table

Output	Output description
16	Baseline data set on Global Majority staff undertaking PGR degrees for regional employers, with a framework developed in collaboration with UHB
17	Recruitment report, including set of principles and checklists for employers – co-produced with Global Majority PGR students
18	Inclusive workforce development strategy for the region developed

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

That's Me! Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands is a project that aims to explore the Global Majority postgraduate research experience, from applying for to being awarded a doctorate. The project is organised into three streams: Routes In, Routes Through, and Routes Out of study. Using research methods including focus groups, interviews, and arts based methods, we want to identify and address the challenges associated with postgraduate research, and so make positive changes to the research culture and community. These changes will benefit both universities and employers in the region. This project is co-led by Birmingham City University and the University of Wolverhampton. It is funded by the UKRI and Of e of Students as part of a nationwide programme to widen participation in postgraduate research.

As part of the project, we are seeking to gather information from the That's Me! Employer Board. The aim of this is to understand how employees undertaking doctoral qualifications are supported and to also ascertain the perceived bene s and challenges of this study. That's Me! supports those from global majority backgrounds; therefore, we are specifi ally interested in collating information for this group.

There will be both closed questions (to help us gather statistical data) and open questions so that you can share your thoughts.

Global majority is a shortened version of the term 'people of the global majority'. We use it to refer to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white minorities. This includes people from black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic groups who are often racialised as 'ethnic minorities'.

Design and delivery:

For surveys:

The survey instrument is available in Appendix A. The survey is expected to close on 22/11/2024.

Location:

Online (QuestionPro)

Logistical Requirements:

The survey will be promoted via the project's Employer Board.

Delivery team:

This activity will be led by the Routes Out Action Research Team supported by the Employer Engagement Officer.

Budget:

No budget is required as participation aligns with Employer Board members' in-kind pledges.

A postgraduate researcher is a student enrolled on a formal course at a university which focuses on the student completing an extended research project. Examples of qualifications postgraduate researchers may be enrolled on include MRes, MPhil and PhD.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to.

WHAT WILL MY INVOLVEMENT BE?

Your involvement is completing the survey.

HOW DO I WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You are free to withdraw within three months of participating without giving a reason. To do so, email us with the completion receipt number issued to you upon completion of the survey. You will not be expected to disclose any personal or confidential information unless you choose to leave contact details. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from the study, we will aim to not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for us to do so.

WHAT WILL MY INFORMATION BE USED FOR?

We will use the collected information for training materials, project publicity, and research and policy publications produced as part of this project. For a full list of the outputs associated with the project, see webpage [<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/education-and-socialwork/research/practitioner-education-research-group/research-projects/thats-me-eliminatingbarriers-to-post-graduate-research>]. Our hope is that the information you provide us will help create more inclusive universities and businesses in the West Midlands.

WILL MY TAKING PART AND MY DATA BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL? WILL IT BE ANONYMISED?

Access to records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only authorised members of the That's Me! Project team will have access to records. Your data will be anonymised: your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All digital files, transcripts, and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from anynames or other direct identification of participants. Any hard copies of research information will be always kept in locked files. Limits to confidentiality: confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless you tell us something which implies that you or someone you mention might be in significant danger of harm and unable to act for themselves; in this case, we may have to inform the relevant agencies of this, but we would discuss this with you first.

WHO HAS REVIEWD THIS STUDY?

This study has undergone ethics review in accordance with the BCU Research Ethics Policy and Procedure.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The BCU Research Privacy Policy can be found at:

<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/privacy-notice/research-participants>

The legal basis used to process your personal data will be *Students "Legitimate interests"*. The legal basis used to process special category personal data (e.g. data that reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health, sex life or sexual orientation, genetic or biometric data) will be for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.

To request a copy of the data held about you please contact:

informationmanagement@bcu.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the BCU Ethics Team at BCU_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk. If you are happy to take part in this study, please complete the consent sheet on the next page.

CONSENT FORM

Please answer the following questions to confirm your understanding and consent.

- » I have read and understood the study information or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- » I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from the study up to three months after completing the survey without having to give a reason.
- » I understand that the information I provide will be used for reports and academic publications and that the information will be anonymised unless I explicitly request not to be anonymised.
- » I agree that my (anonymised) information can be quoted in research outputs, using a pseudonym that I choose myself.
- » I understand that any personal information that can identify me, will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than authorised members of the That's Me! Team.

Unique Identifier. Please insert a unique identifier (your favourite colour and animal e.g., orangefish) to help us identify your response should you wish to withdraw.

Participants in this survey can be entered into a prize draw for a £50 Love2Shop voucher. If you would like to be entered into the draw insert your email here so we can contact you, if you win.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

Section 1 - About you

What is the name of the organisation you work for?

What is your job role within this organisation?

Section 2 - Perceptions of postgraduate research (PGR) study

These questions ask for your views on the potential benefits and challenges of (a) recruiting those with a PGR qualification and (b) supporting current staff to undertake PGR study. By PGR, we are specifically referring to those who hold or are studying for a PhD or Professional Doctorate. Please answer the following questions.

What benefits do you perceive a member of staff who already holds a postgraduate research qualification to offer your organisation? (Please tick all that apply).

- » Advanced research skills
- » Fresh perspective on problems
- » Ability to tackle complex problems
- » Innovation and creativity
- » Critical thinking
- » Data analysis skills
- » Demonstrable project management skills
- » Advanced communication skills
- » Resilience and perseverance
- » Research area directly benefitting organisation

- » No benefits
- » All of the above
- » Other (please specify)

What challenges do you perceive a member of staff who already holds a postgraduate research qualification to pose for your organisation? (Please tick all that apply)

- » High salary expectations
- » Limited practical experience
- » Potential difficulty integrating into existing teams
- » Need for extensive training and supervision
- » Risk of turnover after gaining experience
- » No challenges
- » All of the above
- » Other (specify below)

What benefits do you perceive a member of staff currently undertaking postgraduate research study to offer your organisation? (Please tick all that apply)

- » Development of advanced research skills
- » Increased ability to tackle complex projects
- » Increased confidence
- » Increased innovativeness and creativity
- » Improved links between the organisation and the university
- » Research area directly benefitting organisation
- » No benefits
- » All of the above
- » Other (specify below)

What challenges do you perceive a member of staff who already holds a postgraduate research qualification to pose for your organisation?
(Please tick all that apply)

- » High salary expectations
- » Risk of leaving after obtaining qualification
- » Conflict of interests in work and study commitments or deadlines
- » Reduced performance capacity when balancing work and study
- » Logistics of reallocating work responsibilities to other staff members
- » Research area offering limited value to organisation
- » No challenges
- » All of the above
- » Other (specify below)

Section 3 - Employing and supporting staff as PGRs

These questions ask for information on the number of PGRs currently employed by your organisation, existing support for staff undertaking PGR study, and the type of support you would like your organisation and Birmingham City University to offer those study. By global majority we are referring to those who identify as Black, Asian or ethnic minority. These questions ask for your views on the potential benefits and challenges of (a) recruiting those with a PGR qualification and (b) supporting current staff to undertake PGR study. By PGR, we are specifically referring to those who hold or are studying for a PhD or Professional Doctorate. Please answer the following questions.

How many staff **who already hold** a postgraduate research qualification are employed by your organisation?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| » None | » 15-20 |
| » 1-4 | » Unsure |
| » 5-9 | » Other |
| » 10-14 | |

Currently, how many **global majority** staff who **already hold** a postgraduate research qualification are employed by your organisation?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| » None | » 15-20 |
| » 1-4 | » Unsure |
| » 5-9 | » Other |
| » 10-14 | |

How many staff who are **currently undertaking** postgraduate research study are employed by your organisation?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| » None | » 15-20 |
| » 1-4 | » Unsure |
| » 5-9 | » Other |
| » 10-14 | |

How many **global majority** staff who are **currently undertaking** postgraduate research study are employed by your organisation?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| » None | » 15-20 |
| » 1-4 | » Unsure |
| » 5-9 | » Other |
| » 10-14 | |

How would you rate the application and interview process at BCU?

- | | No Knowledge | Limited Knowledge | Neither knowledgeable or unknowledgeable | Somewhat knowledgeable | Very knowledgeable |
|--|--------------|-------------------|--|------------------------|--------------------|
| » Cost of postgraduate (PG) research | | | | | |
| » Duration of PG research | | | | | |
| » Weekly time commitment of PG research | | | | | |
| » Benefits of PG researchers to organisation | | | | | |
| » Benefits of PG research to employee | | | | | |

What support, if any, is currently offered to existing staff to undertake postgraduate research study?
(Please tick all that apply)

- » Financial support for tuition fees
- » Flexible working hours or reduced workload
- » Access to research facilities and resources
- » Supervisory support from experienced staff
- » Opportunities for networking and collaboration
- » All of the above
- » No support is currently offered
- » Other (specify below)

What support, if any, is offered to new staff (have joined within the last 12 months) who hold a postgraduate research qualification?
(Please tick all that apply)

- » Regular check-ins with line manager
- » Additional training/mentoring for integrating into the workplace
- » Opportunities to use advanced research skills as part of day-to-day job
- » No support is currently offered
- » Other (specify below)

For **existing staff** who may undertake postgraduate research study in the future, what support would you like to offer?

No support Little support Neutral Some support A lot of support

- » Financial support for tuition fees
- » Funding for research-related expenses (e.g. equipment and conference attendance)

No support Little support Neutral Some support A lot of support

- » Flexible working hours or reduced workload to accomodate research commitments
- » Access to research facilities, databases, and libraries
- » Opportunities for presenting research findings or publishing papers
- » Mentorship and guidance from experienced researchers
- » Networking opportunities within and outside the organisation

If there is any other support you would like to offer, please specify here

If Birmingham City University could offer the following, to what extent would they be helpful in supporting your organisation to develop and deliver postgraduate research studentships?

Very unhelpful Somewhat unhelpful Neither helpful or unhelpful Somewhat helpful Very helpful

- » Research project design (e.g. support in designing research projects that align with your organisation's goals and priorities)
- » Recruitment support (e.g. assistance in identifying suitable candidates for research positions based on your organisation's specific requirements).

	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neither helpful or unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful
» Research funding (e.g. joint funding opportunities, assistance in securing external funding or grants).					
» Access to the university's research facilities (e.g. access to the university library, databases, laboratories etc.)					
» Expert supervision (ensuring that projects are supervised by university staff with subject-relevant expertise and prior supervision experience).					
» Training and development (e.g. workshops and courses for postgraduate researchers, including research methods, academic writing, and professional skills)					
» Promotion and impact (e.g. support in promoting research outcomes through events, publications, and networking opportunities).					
» Flexible delivery (e.g. part-time or distance learning options to accommodate the organisation's and staff member's needs)					

If there is any other support you would like Birmingham City University to offer, please specify here

Section 4- Understanding good practice and barriers to inclusive recruitment

These questions ask for information about good practice in inclusive recruitment, barriers to recruiting postgraduate researchers and barriers to recruiting global majority applicants.

If Birmingham City University could offer the following, to what extent would they be helpful in supporting your organisation to develop and deliver postgraduate research studentships?

	Not implemented	In the process of being implemented	Implemented	Prioritised	Highly prioritised
» Targeted outreach to diverse groups					
» Use of diverse selection panels or interviewers					
» Bias-awareness training for recruitment staff					
» Fair shortlisting process					
» Allow for reasonable adjustments at interview					
» Promoting inclusivity and diversity in recruitment materials					
» Tailoring job descriptions to attract diverse candidates					

Thinking about **racial and ethnic equality** specifically, how would you rate the extent to which the following **good practice** in inclusive recruitment is currently implemented by your organisation?

	Not implemented	In the process of being implemented	Implemented	Prioritised	Highly prioritised
» Targeted outreach to diverse communities					
» Use of diverse selection panels or interviewers					
» Bias-awareness training for recruitment staff					
» Providing support for visa and immigration purposes					
» Offering language support or translation					
» Promoting inclusivity and diversity in recruitment materials					
» Tailoring job descriptions to attract diverse candidates					

Can you identify any **barriers** to inclusive to recruitment in your organisation? (Please tick all that apply)

- » Lack of awareness or outreach to diverse communities
- » Not attracting a diverse pool of candidates
- » Discrimination or bias in recruitment processes
- » Lack of exibility in making adjustments for interview process
- » Current limited representation of diverse backgrounds in the organisation
- » Other (specify below)

Can you identify any barriers to recruiting global majority staff who already hold, or are currently undertaking, a postgraduate research qualification? (Please tick all that apply)

- » Discrimination or bias in recruitment processes
- » Lack of awareness or outreach to diverse communities
- » Limited application pool
- » Inadequate advertising or outreach efforts
- » Visa and immigration issues
- » Geographic location or relocation challenges
- » Research expertise perceived to not translate to role
- » Limited opportunities to apply or develop research to work context
- » Other (specify below)

Section 5 - Concluding questions

These questionsask for any additional information you think relevant to the topic, and if you would be available and interested in further participation.

Is there anything else you would like to add on the subject of PGR recruitment and/or inclusive recruitment practices?

Would you be interested in participating in an interview or a focus group to discuss this topic in greater detail?

- » Yes
- » No