



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY  
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# BASELINE DATA & UHB CASE STUDY (016) BARRIERS TO RECRUITMENT REPORT (017) INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE STRATEGY (018)

## THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO  
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY  
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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November 2025

Published by BCU

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



Research  
England

Office for  
Students



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report brings together multiple outputs from the **That's Me!** Project, specifically Outputs O16 (Sections 1 and 2), O17 (Sections 1 and 3), and O18 (Section 3), and should be read alongside Outputs O19 and O20. These outputs are thematically linked by their focus on understanding how to make 'routes out' of postgraduate research study more inclusive for Global Majority doctoral researchers.

The report is structured in three interconnected sections, each functioning as a distinct but complementary sub-report. Grouped across three categories, Section 1 examines the key barriers faced by Global Majority doctoral researchers in recruitment, development, and progression beyond doctoral study, and explores the concept of "Routes Out" of doctoral study, defined as the employment pathways—and pathways towards employment—available after completing a doctorate. It highlights Global Majority PGR aspirations, the persistence of binary perceptions of careers as either academic or non-academic, and the need to build shared literacy about postgraduate research and doctoral-level skills among employers. The section concludes with recommendations to address these barriers, including revised EDI practices, structured mentorship and sponsorship, and the creation of spaces that support literacy-building and progression.

Section 2 provides a practical example of efforts to dismantle these barriers through a case study of the **West Midlands Clinical Academic Mentorship and Leadership Programme**, delivered by University Hospitals Birmingham; a member of the That's Me! Employer Board. The programme was designed to support Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) individuals from underrepresented healthcare professions to engage with postgraduate research opportunities. Through a combination of skills development, mentorship, and career planning, the case study illustrates key design principles, learning outcomes, and transferable lessons for employers seeking to support Global Majority doctoral talent.

Section 3 synthesises insights from Sections 1 and 2, alongside wider evidence, to present an **Inclusive Regional Workforce Strategy**. The strategy sets out the case for action, identifies core strategic priorities, and outlines practical actions employers can take to more effectively recognise, support, and mobilise Global Majority doctoral talent across the region. It includes prompts to support organisational action and proposes engagement with a **Routes Out Professional Development Hub**—an interconnected conceptual and functional space that brings together employers, universities, and postgraduate researchers to enable collaboration, mobility, and shared learning.

Overall, this report seeks to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive regional workforce by widening access to postgraduate research, improving progression and recognition of doctoral-level skills, and enabling employers to harness doctoral study as a form of advanced professional development that adds value to the workplace. The findings are underpinned by the triangulation of three perspectives: current PGRs within the institution, postgraduate research alumni, and employers operating across the region.