



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

033 BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY'S DOCTORAL BRIDGING PROGRAMME

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the creation of Birmingham City University's free-to-access Doctoral Bridging Programme, developed through the **That's Me!** project to widen access to postgraduate research (PGR). Research has shown that the transition from undergraduate or master's study into a doctorate is a significant barrier, particularly for underrepresented groups. Although the UK has more pre-doctoral initiatives than elsewhere, existing provision is limited: private programmes are costly and aimed mainly at international students, while university-led schemes are uneven and often selective. Crucially, research suggests that there are few, if any, open educational resources designed to prepare diverse applicants for doctoral study.

To address this gap, Birmingham City University (BCU) has developed an open educational resource hosted on Brightspace. The programme consists of three modules—understanding the doctorate, devising a project, and making an application—supported by interactive activities and quizzes that build confidence and practical skills. On completion, participants receive a certificate of completion.

The programme is now fully developed and undergoing institutional review, with launch expected in late 2025. As the first free-to-access doctoral bridging programme in the UK, it removes cost and access barriers, supports diversity, and helps prospective students take the crucial next step into postgraduate research.