



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

09 SECONDMENT OPPORTUNITIES

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Birmingham City University's **That's Me!** initiative piloted a **Research Assistantship Secondment Scheme** to provide paid, developmental research experience for doctoral researchers, postgraduate taught students, and post-doctoral alumni. Designed to foreground inclusive practice, the scheme aimed to widen participation—particularly for Global Majority researchers—while supporting the delivery of project activities.

Across four rounds, 34 Research Assistants were recruited through transparent, inclusive processes. They received induction, mentoring, and fair pay, and worked on mini-projects that developed skills in research design, delivery, and dissemination. Many also gained experiences beyond the scheme, presenting at conferences, contributing to sector initiatives, and receiving institutional recognition.

Initial evaluation suggests the scheme strengthened skills, confidence, and collaborative working, with mentorship and co-creation especially valued. Areas for development include providing clearer project briefs, building in structured project management training, enabling more in-person interaction, and streamlining access to resources.

Overall, the scheme demonstrates the value of research assistantships as inclusive training opportunities that support both skills development and progression into postgraduate research.