



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands



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THE TALENT XCHANGE: EVALUATION REPORT AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

That's Me! Eliminating Barriers to Postgraduate Research Study in the West Midlands is a collaborative initiative funded by the Office for Students (OfS) and Research England, led jointly by Birmingham City University (BCU) and the University of Wolverhampton (UoW). It responds to persistent inequities in postgraduate research access, representation, and employability for researchers from Global Majority backgrounds — communities historically underrepresented and underserved within higher education. Grounded in the principles of inclusivity, intersectionality, transformation, and collaboration, the project seeks to increase access to postgraduate research, enhance progression and career outcomes, and support a more representative regional research and employment ecosystem.

As part of that wider agenda, the **Talent Xchange Networking Event (Talent Xchange)** was developed and delivered on 30 September 2025 at The Old Library in Digbeth, Birmingham. The event adopted a 'speed-networking' format, pairing postgraduate researchers with regional employers for focused one-to-one conversations, complemented by parallel panels on academic and industry careers and a CV-feedback clinic. Its principal goal was to facilitate meaningful interactions that raise awareness of the value of research talent beyond academia, build confidence among Global Majority PGRs in navigating career pathways, and encourage employers to engage with and reflect on inclusive recruitment and talent practices.

In delivering the **Talent Xchange**, the **That's Me!** project team aimed to pilot a scalable, inclusive model of researcher-employer engagement — one that deliberately centres the voices and experiences of Global Majority researchers and fosters a regional network of opportunity and connection. This evaluation report documents the design, delivery, feedback and learning arising from that pilot, and provides a practical Blueprint and Best Practice Guide, alongside recommendations and next steps for embedding and sustaining inclusive networking practice in postgraduate researcher development.