



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

BCU SECONDMENT SCHEME EVALUATION

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Dr Sulayman Bah, Sabreen Jan
December 2025

Published by BCU

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



Research
England

Office for
Students



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2024, the **That's Me!** project team at Birmingham City University commissioned a **Research Assistantship Secondment Scheme**, offering opportunities to join the project team to work on mini-projects relating to addressing systemic inequalities faced by Global Majority students in postgraduate research studies. The scheme involved existing and completed Birmingham City University postgraduate researchers and taught postgraduates supported by senior academics. The seven-week long Research Assistantship Secondment Scheme, from July to August 2025, offered participants the opportunity to contribute to the **That's Me!** project outputs or targets by undertaking mini-projects. The series of secondment style mini-projects include, BCU website audit, research exchange seminars, data analysis, pre-research degree programmes, open access materials, PGR portfolio, open student forums and mentoring programmes. Each participant took on the role of a Research Assistant, working alongside others. All participants as part of the secondment were paid, and experienced interdisciplinary research, networking, skills development and research project management.

The **That's Me!** project team recognised the need to incorporate the views of postgraduate researchers into their project goals. This report provides an evaluation of the Research Assistantship Secondment Scheme by exploring the experiences of Research Assistants to determine its effectiveness in supporting domiciled Global Majority postgraduate researchers. The report is based on data generated through a survey completed by the Research Assistants in September 2024. The report focuses on the experiences of the Research Assistants, identifying issues and providing recommendations to improve future secondment opportunities. Some of the key findings based on the survey of 15 participants, including 5 postdocs, 6 Postgraduate Taught (full-time) students, and 4 Postgraduate Research (fulltime and part-time) students are:

- The Scheme attracted a diverse group of participants, with the respondents representing a range of academic backgrounds and 46.67% identifying as from Global Majority backgrounds.
- Most respondents worked between 20-37.5 hours per week and reported having an "excellent" experience and feeling "very satisfied" with the support they received throughout the scheme. 77.8% of participants reported their expectations were met and most believed that the hourly rate pay was "excellent."
- Most respondents reported that the Scheme's online recruitment and induction process was "excellent", while a few indicated a preference for in person interactions.
- Most respondents reported that the Scheme enabled them to significantly improve their knowledge and skills.