



Eliminating barriers to postgraduate
research study in the West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

FIELDWORK DESIGN TEMPLATE

EMPLOYER BOARD
FOCUS GROUP

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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Research
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Name of Fieldwork Activity:

Online Focus Group with Employer Board

Content of the Activity:

Research Statement (50-100 words): Summarise the fieldwork activity, including information about target groups. This will be used as part of promoting fieldwork. Please draft in appropriate terms.

The focus group targets members of the Employer Board who have supported their staff to undertake postgraduate research qualifications such as PhDs. This will go to all eligible members of the Employer Board, which includes several NHS members. It is intended to collect data to complement that already collected as part of the UHB Case Study and the Employer Survey. The goal is to collect qualitative data about employers' thoughts and experiences relating to supporting their staff to undertake PhDs, and how the staff members they have supported have contributed to their organisation and the NHS more generally after completing PhD study. We are hoping to recruit 3-6 participants for this focus group. It will be conducted online on MS Teams for the convenience of participants, with an option for in-person at Birmingham City University for those who wish to meet in person rather than online.

Contribution to project outputs:

Output	Output description
1	Report on pathways for Global Majority PGRs, including employer progression routes
2	Workshops held to explore barriers – 1 for HE, students, employers and 1 for parents, relatives and communities
34	Open educational resource created

Design:

Facilitation Plan: Describe the planned approach for facilitating the fieldwork, including a structure (e.g., introductions, question themes and prompts, role of the moderator and any physical or virtual prompts or stimuli to be used).

The focus group will take place online on Microsoft Teams, with members (NHS) of the Employer Board who have supported their staff to pursue postgraduate research qualifications such as PhDs. Participants will be recruited at the Employer Engagement Event at in November 2024 and via the Employer Engagement Officer. They will be asked to discuss their experience of supporting their staff to do a doctorate, how it's benefitted their organisation and the NHS more generally, and the careers of staff members post-doctorate. This is to complement the data that has already been collected via the UHB case study and the employer survey.

The focus group will be one hour and will be facilitated by *That's Me!* Project team members.

Focus group members will be asked to complete consent forms in advance of the focus group. These will be based on the standard consent forms and participant information used for *That's Me!*

Focus Group Structure

The focus group will begin with introductions to both the team members and the participants. They'll be asked to identify their organisation and briefly describe their experience with supporting their staff to undertake a doctoral level degree.

It will be based around the following prompts:

Tell us about staff at your organisation who have been supported to do a doctoral degree.

- » How has it gone?
- » What are your perceptions of the challenges or barriers and how were they resolved?
- » As you understand it, what are the benefits of staff pursuing a doctoral degree for your organisation and more generally for the NHS?
- » What sorts of knowledge and insights can doctoral research bring to your organisation and to the NHS?
- » What sorts of skills and attributes can a doctoral researcher bring to your organisation and to the NHS?
- » How has doctoral study shaped the careers of staff you have supported – what have they gone on to achieve?
- » What advice would you give NHS trusts/ other organisations who are interested in supporting their staff to do doctoral degrees?

Facilitation Plan continued:

Participants will be sent the prompts in advance, so they have time to think about them before the focus group.

The session will conclude by asking the participants if they have any general comments and reflections to make. Debriefing information will be provided and reiterated, including information on support, contacting the project team and withdrawing data/participation.

Recordings will then be uploaded for transcription, following the approved process for the checking of transcripts and data handling and deletion for That's Me!

Delivery Information:

Location: Specify the location(s) where the fieldwork will be conducted, including any details about the venue or facilities.

The focus group will take place online on Microsoft Teams. A face-to-face alternative based at Birmingham City University can be offered if enough participants demonstrate an interest.

Logistical Requirements: [List any logistical requirements for the fieldwork, such as equipment, seating arrangements, refreshments, creative resources etc.]

Participants will require access to a stable internet signal and a quiet room to participate in the focus group without interruption.

Delivery team: Identify the members of the research team involved in delivery of the fieldwork, along with their roles and responsibilities.

Professor Kirsten Forkert

Budget: Provide an overview of the budget for the fieldwork, including any expenses related to participant compensation, materials, etc.

None, in line with the project's budget protocol.