

FIELDWORK DESIGN TEMPLATE

UNDERGRADUATE (UGT) FOCUS
GROUPS (ONLINE)

THAT'S ME!

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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Name of Fieldwork Activity:

Undergraduate (UGT) Focus Groups (Online)

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.

Undergraduate students are to be invited to take part in a series of online focus groups. These focus groups will ask similar questions to some of our other focus groups (Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT)) about perceptions of postgraduate research study, barriers to undertaking such study and any other factors that may be involved in the transition from undergraduate programmes to postgraduate research. This will allow us to consider early factors that may influence postgraduate research engagement and uptake that we would be unaware of if we asked current postgraduate research students (who presumably have overcome or not been stopped by some of the barriers they may raise in their focus groups).

These focus groups will be approximately 1 hour in length, hosted and recorded online via Microsoft Teams. Each FG will involve 3-6 participants, with each receiving individual incentive vouchers in line with the project budget protocol. 3 focus groups will be arranged in the first instance, with a further 2 dates to be offered a month later if needed. If the numbers needed for each individual focus group are not met then the focus group questions can be converted for individual interviews and run as such.

Contribution to project outputs: Confirm outputs in the table

Output	Output description
2	Workshops held to explore barriers – 1 for HE, students, employers and 1 for parents, relatives and communities
3	Report on barriers (stand-alone and interrelated)
4	Set of recommendations for new approaches according to intersectionality
6	Inclusive PGR online application processes established

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).

Focus groups of 3-6 individuals, hosted online via Microsoft Teams. They will be facilitated by members of the That's Me! Project team for approximately one hour.

The That's Me project aims to assess the barriers to postgraduate research study. It is important to identify UGT students' preconceptions, beliefs and experiences of/about doctoral study. Prior to attending the FG, the facilitator (EA) will share the Participant Information Sheet, Consent form, and demographic information questionnaire (optional) with participants.

The recruitment criteria is:

- » Undergraduate students aged 18+
- » People of Global Majority heritage

The team will aim to engage with students from a mix of genders, ethnicity, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Focus Group Structure

Consent

EA will ask participants if they are happy to be recorded on Microsoft Teams. EA will make note of any names that do not wish to be included in the transcription. EA will begin recording and notify participants. EA will introduce herself to begin to build rapport with participants. EA will introduce the That's Me! Project and the purpose of the focus groups. EA will read consent forms for each participant to provide verbal consent to participate in the focus group. Participants would be required to share their Consent forms prior to the focus group. Following this, participants will introduce themselves and EA will explain the purpose of the session.

Introduction

EA will begin the Focus Group with this statement: 'I would like to hear about your true thoughts, feelings and experiences (if any) about university and studying further, after an undergraduate degree. There are no right or wrong answers, and everything discussed here will remain confidential. We value your thoughts and feelings and consider them important.

To explore initial thoughts of university, EA to start the discussion with the first question:

Facilitation Plan continued:

- » How would you describe your experience studying at university so far?
- » What are some of the enjoyable aspects of studying? (*Prompt: course/modules, friendship groups, progress in skills etc.*)
- » What are some of the challenging aspects of studying? (*Prompt: getting in, workload, financial pressures, belonging, etc.*)

The introductory section of the focus group is likely to take 10-15minutes. This will give EA the opportunity to answer any questions participants had so far.

To begin the next section, EA will steer the discussion to prompts and project related questions by setting the scene about doctoral study.

The following questions will be asked of participants over the course of the focus group:

UG FG Questions

Question Block 1: Transition to PGR study

- » Have you thought about doing a PGR study (such as a PhD or Professional Doctorate)? What is interesting to you about doing a PhD? *If not, are there specific reasons why?*
- » Are you aware of the differences between the range of PGR studies available? *Are any more appealing to you than others? Why?*
- » Do you know anyone who has started PGR study? *What was their experience like?*
- » Have anyone encouraged you to go on and do PGR study? Any friends or anyone in your community? Any lecturers, staff or role models?
- » What do you think the application process is like?
- » Have you received any information about this process from the University? *Was it useful? What was good/bad about it? If not what would you think would be useful to receive?*

To begin the next section, EA will steer the discussion to prompts and project related questions by setting the scene about postgraduate research study.

Question Block 2: Barriers and Challenges

- » What do you think doing a PGR study involves – what would the experience be like?
- » What sort of challenges do you think you might face in applying to do PGR study?
- » What sorts of challenges do you think you'd face in doing a PhD?
- » If you were to apply for PGR studies how would you plan on funding it? *How does this make you feel about PGR study?*

- » What would put you off studying a doctorate?
- » What sort of support or information would you like to see about PGR study and opportunities? *About opportunities/About applying/About studying?*
- » What sorts of careers do you think people do after finishing PGR studies?

Conclusion

EA will ask participants if there is anything they would like to raise, add or change about their responses. At the end of the focus group, EA will remind participants of their right to withdraw and the last day to do so. EA will thank all participants for their time and involvement and stop the recording. EA will share the e-vouchers to participants' email addresses.

Duration:

60 minutes

Delivery Information:

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

Online (via Microsoft Teams) (March 2025)

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

Advertising via internal communications is needed.

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

Dr Eli Ashong

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

Participant vouchers, in line with the project's budget protocol.