

Appendix C – Survey 1 supporting documentation and questions

Invitation and reminder emails:

Invitation:

Hello [FIRSTNAME],

An opportunity to share your views on progression after OU taught qualifications.

We are members of the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) who are investigating the progression of Open University (OU) students from taught courses to postgraduate research. We are particularly interested in decisions students make regarding whether to pursue or not pursue this pathway, their motivations, and the barriers they may face.

As you recently completed a STEM taught qualification we want to hear about your experiences and views in relation to progression from taught courses to postgraduate research. We would like to emphasise that we are interested in your responses even if you do not currently plan to pursue opportunities for postgraduate research. The data will be processed anonymously. The survey includes further information about your rights and how we will be using the data.

Please follow the link below to access the survey. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey will be open until 23rd December 2024.

If you have any questions about this survey or the research project, please email alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk.

Many thanks,

Alice Fraser-McDonald, Sally Jordan, David Sharp, and Teresa Sides

Reminder:

Hello [FIRSTNAME],

An opportunity to share your views on progression after OU taught qualifications.

We recently invited you to participate in an online survey about your experiences and views in relation to progression from taught courses to postgraduate research at the OU. We would like to emphasise that we are interested in your responses even if you do not currently plan to pursue opportunities for postgraduate research.

Please follow the link below to access the survey. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey will be open until 23rd December 2024.

If you have any questions about this survey or the research project, please email alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk.

Many thanks,

Alice Fraser-McDonald, Sally Jordan, David Sharp, and Teresa Sides

Survey questions:

Survey of OU graduates to investigate progression from taught courses to postgraduate research

Introduction

Welcome to this survey about student progression to postgraduate research. The survey is about your experiences and views in relation to progression from OU taught courses to postgraduate research. We would like to emphasise that we are interested in your responses even if you do not currently plan to pursue opportunities for postgraduate research.

The survey is open until 23rd December and should take around 10 minutes to complete. The responses will help us to find out about decisions OU students make regarding whether to pursue or not pursue postgraduate research, their motivations, and the barriers they may face.

This research project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion from, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number: 2024-0543-2.

Participation

Completing the survey is entirely voluntary and your participation or non-participation will not be linked to, or impact upon, your studies in any way.

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would like to share more of your experiences in a follow-up interview. Choosing to participate in an interview is entirely voluntary and separate from your decision to complete the survey. Interviews will be held online via Microsoft Teams in March 2025 and will take no more than 30 minutes.

Consent

Completing the survey confirms that you give your consent for The Open University to use the data that you provide (i.e. your responses to the survey) as specified in the following section.

Data protection

- The data you provide (i.e. your responses to the survey) will be processed and stored in accordance with The Open University's Student Privacy Policy <https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/privacy-notice>.
- Data will be stored on a password protected computer and secure server.
- Any email addresses given in the online survey will be stored securely to ensure confidentiality.
- Only members of the research team will have access to the raw data.
- Data will be anonymised and disposed of in accordance with the OU's data protection policy once the project has ended (31st July 2025).
- Aggregated anonymised data will be used for research and quality improvement purposes at The Open University and beyond, and may be published in Open University reports, academic journals or in other public contexts.
- Your survey responses are completely anonymous.
- Once you submit your responses, it will not be possible for your data to be removed from the study.

Your right to withdraw from the study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation by closing the survey window in your web browser.

Your survey responses will be separated from any contact details shared when choosing to volunteer for a follow-up interview upon receipt of the submission. After this point, the survey responses are completely anonymous, and it will not be possible for your data to be removed from the study.

Accessibility

If you have a disability or an additional requirement that makes it difficult for you to complete the survey online, please email Alice Fraser-McDonald (alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk).

The survey has been designed for use on a standard computer (desktop or laptop). Full accessibility on a handheld device (such as a smartphone or tablet computer) cannot be guaranteed.

Contact details

The project team consists of: Alice Fraser-McDonald (project lead), Sally Jordan, David Sharp, and Teresa Sides.

If you have any questions relating to this survey please contact Alice Fraser-McDonald (alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk), or alternatively, Jonathan Nyk (jonathan.nyk@open.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, your contribution is very much appreciated.

Declaration of Consent

- Please read the following statements and indicate whether you are willing/able to take part in the survey:
- I have read and understood the information provided and understand what is involved in taking part in this piece of research, and how the information I provide will be used.
- I understand that project findings may be published in various forms, including project reports, academic journal articles, conference papers and blog posts.
- I know who/where to ask any questions about the research or my participation.
- I am aware that I can withdraw from the study at any time before submitting my responses by closing my internet browser.
- I am aware that I am unable to withdraw from this study once submitted as my responses are collected anonymously.
- I understand that my data will be stored securely in line with the OU's data protection policy, and handled in line with the Student Privacy Policy: <https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/privacy-notice>
- I agree to being quoted anonymously in reports and publications related to this project.

1. I have read all of the above statements and can confirm that:

I am willing to voluntarily take part in the following survey and support this research.

I do not wish to complete the survey and will leave this page now.

2. Please specify which OU qualification(s) you have completed: (select all that apply)

Drop down list including:

Q15: BSc Economics and Mathematical Studies

Q31: BSc Mathematics

Q36: BSc Mathematics and Statistics

Q46: BSc Mathematics and its learning

Q52: BSc Environmental Science

Q61: BSc Design and Innovation

Q62: BSc Computing and IT

Q64: BSc Natural Sciences
Q65: Bachelor of Engineering
Q67: BSc Computing and IT and a second subject
Q71: BSc Health Sciences
Q77: BSc Mathematics and Physics
R16: BSc Geography and Environmental Science
R28: BSc Combined STEM
R38: BSc Data Science
R51: BSc Physics
R58: BSc Biology
R59: BSc Chemistry
R60: BSc Cyber Security
R62: BSc Computing with Electronic Engineering
M04: Master of Engineering (integrated)
F77: MSc Space Science and Technology
F66: MSc Computing
F87: MSc Cyber Security
F46: MSc Engineering
F36: MSc Technology Management
F65: MSc Environmental Management
F47: MSc Systems Thinking in Practice
F04: MSc Mathematics
F78: MSc Mental Health Science

3. What were your motivations for studying for your current qualification (please select all that apply)?

Career change
Interest in subject
Career development/progression
Progression towards possible research
Other [Open response box]

4. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

5. What interested you in a distance based qualification with the OU?

[Open response box]

6. On completion of your taught qualification, did you **consider** applying to undertake any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at **any** university? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

7. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

8. What were your main motivations for considering applying to undertake a postgraduate research qualification (please select all that apply)?

Career change

Interest in subject

Career development/progression

Progression towards possible research

Other

9. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

10. Did you **apply** to undertake any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at **any** university? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

11. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

12. Did you, or are you about to, **commence study** on any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at **any** university? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

13. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

14. Are you aware that the Open University offers postgraduate research qualifications (PhD or MPhil, or other)?

Yes

No

Not sure/no answer

15. How did you become aware of the postgraduate research qualifications offered by the Open University? (please select all that apply)

Word of mouth

Email

Module or qualification-related communication (e.g., news section)

Online search

Open University Student's Association

OU contact/tutor

Careers advice

Other

16. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

17. Did you **consider** applying to undertake any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at the **Open University**? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

18. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

19. Did you **apply** to undertake any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at the **Open University**? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

20. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

21. Did you, or are you about to, **commence study** on any of the following postgraduate research qualifications at the **Open University**? (please select all that apply)

Part time MPhil

Full time MPhil

Part time PhD

Full time PhD

Other

None of the above

22. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

23. To what extent do you agree that your taught qualification with the Open University helped you to gain skills that would be useful for postgraduate research (either at the OU or elsewhere)?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

24. To what extent do you agree that support was available during your taught qualification that would have helped you to progress to postgraduate research (either at the OU or elsewhere)?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

25. From your perspective, what are the main barriers to pursuing postgraduate research (either at the OU or elsewhere)?

[Open response box]

26. If you have any other comments that you feel would be relevant to this research topic, please add them below.

[Open response box]

Demographics questions:

It would be very helpful if you could answer a few additional questions to tell us more about yourself. Your responses to these questions will enable us to investigate whether progression from taught Open University study to postgraduate research is different for particular groups of students.

27. What gender do you identify as?

Female

Male

Non-binary
Other
Prefer not to say

28. Please specify your ethnicity.

Asian [including Asian British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, any other Asian background]

Black [including Black British, Caribbean, African]

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

White

Other ethnic group

Prefer not to say

29. Please indicate your age.

Below 18

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 or over

Prefer not to say

30. We also would like to know about some of the other commitments on your time, please tick all that apply, please select all that apply.

Full time employed/self-employed (paid or voluntary)

Part time employed/self-employed (paid or voluntary)

Caring responsibilities (including childcare)

Retired

Not currently employed

Prefer not to say

31. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

After survey text:

We are also going to conduct short follow-up interviews via Microsoft Teams to gain a more detailed understanding of the decisions that students make relating to this pathway. We would be grateful if you would be willing to volunteer to participate in an interview; you will be given an opportunity to provide contact details for this in the next question. We can offer you a £15 gift voucher on completion of the interview as a token of our appreciation. Please note that, although we plan to interview as many volunteers as possible, offering to take part in a follow-up interview does not guarantee that you will be selected.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please email: alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk.

32. If you would be willing to participate in a short follow-up interview via Microsoft Teams, please give your email address below.

[Open response box]

33. If you would like to receive a short summary of the results of this project, please give your email address below.

[Open response box]