

Appendix D – Survey 2 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 about whether to pursue or not pursue this pathway, their motivations, and the barriers they may face.

As you are currently studying an end-of-qualification module on a STEM taught qualification we want to hear 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.

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 15th April 2025.

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 15th April 2025.

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:

Progression from taught courses to postgraduate research

Introduction

Welcome to this survey about student progression to postgraduate research. This survey is about your intentions 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 from 19th March to 15th April 2025 and should take around 10 minutes to complete. The responses will help us to find out about decisions OU students make about 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.

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 Nylk (jonathan.nylk@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 of the following modules you are studying: (please select all that apply)

Drop down list including:

TM470: The computing and IT project

T452: The engineering project

SXH390: Science project module: health sciences

SXC390: Science project module: chemistry

SXB390: Science project module: biology

SXP390: Science project module: radiation and matter

SXG390: Science project module: geosciences

SXE390: Science project module: environmental science practical project

T317: Innovation: designing for change

SDT306: Environment: responding to change

S840: Project module for Master of environmental science

S841/SXS841: Masters level project in physical sciences

T802: Research project

T803: MSc project: researching in context

M840: Dissertation in mathematics

SXH890: MSc project module

T460: MEng Individual project

T885: Team engineering

3. What were your motivations for signing up for your current module/qualification (please select all that apply)?

Career change

Interest in subject

Career development/progression

Progression towards possible research

Other

4. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

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

[Open response box]

After completing your taught qualification, would 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 postgraduate research qualification, please specify below

[Open response box]

8. What were your main motivations for considering 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. Are you aware that the Open University offers postgraduate research qualifications (PhD or MPhil, or other)?

Yes

No

Not sure/no answer

11. 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)

OU website

Online search

Open University Student's Association

OU contact/tutor

Careers advice

Other

12. If other, please specify below

[Open response box]

13. After completing your taught qualification, would 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

14. If other postgraduate research qualification, please specify below.

[Open response box]

15. To what extent do you agree that your studies with the Open University would help 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

16. To what extent do you agree that the support available during your OU studies would help 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

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

[Open response box]

18. 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.

19. What gender do you identify as?

Female

Male

Non-binary

Other

Prefer not to say

20. 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

21. 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

22. 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

23. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

After survey text:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, your answers will make valuable contributions to understanding current student experiences and motivations relating to progression from OU taught courses to postgraduate research. If you would like to receive an update about the results of this project, please indicate this preference in the next question.

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

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

[Open response box]