

Appendix G – Interview 2 questions and supporting documentation

Participant Information Sheet

INTERVIEW: PROGRESSION FROM TAUGHT COURSES TO POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH AT THE OU

The project team consists of:

Alice Fraser-McDonald (E&I)

Sally Jordan (SPS)

David Sharp (E&I)

Teresa Sides (C&C)

Contact details

Alice Fraser-McDonald (project lead)

Email: alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk

Alternative contact: Jonathan Nytk

Email: jonathan.nylk@open.ac.uk

Introduction

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. As you are a postgraduate research student in STEM who has previously completed a taught qualification with the OU we want to hear about your experiences and views in relation to this pathway. The data gathered will help us to better understand the decisions students make about whether to pursue or not pursue postgraduate research at the OU, their motivations, and the barriers they may face.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute to an interview via Microsoft Teams between 4th and 30th November 2024. Each interview will last for no more than 30 minutes and will be conducted by a member

of the project team. The interviews will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.

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

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and your participation or nonparticipation will not be linked to, or impact upon, your studies in any way.

Interview findings may be published in Open University reports or academic journals and/or presented at academic conferences. All information that might identify individual participants will be anonymised prior to publication in any form, for example, any quotes from participants in the interviews will be anonymised or paraphrased.

Consent

If you consent to participation in an interview, please complete and return the attached consent form to alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk. You will not be able to participate until we have received this form.

Your right to withdraw from the study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview.

You have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the interview by emailing Alice Fraser-McDonald (alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk), up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis (30th November 2024).

Data protection

The data you provide (i.e. your responses in the interview) 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. Only members of the research team will have access to the raw data. Your data will be retained in a fully anonymised format for a period of 10 years after the project completion date (31st July 2025). Interview recordings and transcripts will be deleted at the end of the project.

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 interview responses will be anonymised, but you have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the interview, up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis.

Accessibility

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

Thank you

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

We would be very grateful for your participation and can offer you a £15 gift voucher on completion of the interview as a token of our appreciation.

If you have any questions relating to the interview or research project, please do not hesitate to contact Alice Fraser-McDonald (alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk).

Consent Form

Informed consent for interview for the investigation into the progression of OU STEM students from taught courses to postgraduate research

Project leader: Alice Fraser-McDonald (School of Engineering & Innovation)

Project team: Sally Jordan, David Sharp, Teresa Sides

Please highlight your choice by clicking inside the appropriate box.

1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the information sheet for the following study: "Interview with current STEM Postgraduate Researchers who previously completed taught courses with the OU", or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions I am not comfortable with, and I can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Alice Fraser-McDonald (alice.fraser-mcdonald@open.ac.uk) up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis (30 th November 2024), without having to give a reason.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in an online interview discussion with a member of the project team.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the interview being recorded	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

2. Use of information in the study

<p>I understand that information I provide may be used, in fully anonymous form, in internal Open University reports and presentations, research articles and conference presentations.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or Student PI, will not be shared beyond the project team.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I understand that the data I provide (i.e. my responses to the interview discussion) will be processed and stored in accordance with The Open University's Student Privacy Policy: https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/privacy-notice.</p> <p>The data I provide will be retained in a fully anonymised format for a period of 10 years after the project completion date (31st July 2025).</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>I agree to being quoted anonymously.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>

3. Future use and reuse of information by others

<p>I give permission for the data that I provide to be deposited in a specialist data centre after it has been anonymised, so it can be used for future research and learning by educational establishments.</p> <p>Consent forms will be retained for as long as the research data are retained. They will be digitised and stored securely (encrypted). The original forms will be destroyed securely.</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
--	---	--

4. Signatures

Name of participant [in CAPITALS]	Signature (electronic signatures may be accepted)	Date
--	--	-------------

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.

Invitation and reminder emails

Invitation

Hello [NAME],

An opportunity to help us understand the pathway to postgraduate research at the OU.

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 a postgraduate research student in STEM who has previously completed a taught qualification with the OU we want to hear about your experiences and views in relation to this pathway.

We would be very grateful for your participation and can offer you a £15 gift voucher on completion of the interview as a token of our appreciation.

The interview will take no more than **30 minutes** and will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Interviews will be held between **1st October and 31st October 2024**.

If you are available and willing to participate in an interview, please read the attached participant information sheet and reply to this email by **25th September 2024**, including a signed copy of the attached consent form. We will then be in touch to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the interview.

If you have any questions about the interviews 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 [NAME],

We recently invited you to participate in an interview about your experiences and views in relation to progression from taught courses to postgraduate research at the OU. We would be very grateful for your participation and can offer you a £15 gift voucher on completion of the interview as a token of our appreciation.

The interview will take no more than **30 minutes** and will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Interviews are being held between **4th and 30th November 2024**.

If you are available and willing to participate in an interview, please read the attached participant information sheet and reply to this email by **18th October 2024**, including a signed copy of the attached consent form. We will then be in touch to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the interview.

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

Many thanks,

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

Interview 2 questions and interviewer prompts

Introduction:

Thank for agreeing to take part in this interview.

Purpose – As you are a postgraduate research student in STEM who has previously completed a taught qualification with the OU we want to hear about your experiences and views in relation to this pathway. The data gathered will help us to better understand the decisions students make about whether to pursue or not pursue postgraduate research at the OU, their motivations, and the barriers they may face.

Participation – As explained in the PIS, answers will be treated in complete confidence and data will be stored securely. Answers will be anonymised.

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and your participation or nonparticipation will not be linked to, or impact upon, your studies in any way.

You can withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or up until the time all data have been aggregated for analysis (30th November 2024).

Interview logistics – The interview will last for around 30 minutes. Today's session will be recorded, but only for the purposes of transcription.

Areas to cover with questions:

- Which STEM school are you in?
- Why did you originally choose to do a taught qualification with the OU? (If necessary, prompt why the OU specifically?).
- Can you tell me about what led you to consider postgraduate research?
 - *When* did you start thinking about postgraduate research?
- Did you look at doing postgraduate research anywhere other than the OU?
- How did you find out about postgraduate research opportunities?
 - Generally?
 - At the OU?

In the above questions could you please explore sources of information, e.g. finding out about OU postgraduate research through an OU contact/tutor, careers advice, or information session.

- Why you chose to do a PhD with the OU?
 - Explore specific reasons for choosing the OU.
- Are/were you a full-time or part-time PhD student?
 - Were there any specific reasons why you chose part-time/full-time, please elaborate on these reasons if possible?
- Could you tell us a little more about your funding, for example are/were you self-funded or funded by a research council?

We are now going to explore the transition from taught study to postgraduate research:

- Is your experience of postgraduate research what you expected?
- In what ways do you feel that your OU taught qualification prepared you/ supported you for postgraduate research?
- What more could have been done to prepare you for your PhD?
- What barriers/difficulties did you face when transitioning from OU taught study to OU PG research?
- Did you relocate to start your PhD at the OU?
 - Are there barriers to progression to PG research relating to geographic location, please could you elaborate if possible?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about moving from taught studies to postgraduate research with the OU?

Wrap-up:

Thank you very much for your participation. We would like to give you a £15 gift voucher as a token of our appreciation for completing the interview and this will be arranged at the end of March. • The project as a whole will be finished in summer 2025, would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this project?