

Newcastle University Transition Research

Focus Group Interviews – University students

Checklist

- * Sheets, 1, 2, 3 and 4 (sheet 1 includes written individual consent)
- * Tape recorder: prior to recording, interviewer/moderator records type of focus group, gives recognition symbol, school/college location, time. Tape paused during writing period. At end of interview, interviewer records end of interview with..., time, location
- * When 2 people are available, one person takes the moderator role, the other distributes/collects sheets, and applies tape recording procedures.

Introduction/protocols

Hello and thank you for taking part in this focus group.

Our names are << >> (my name is << >>) and we're from << >> (I'm from << >>). We are conducting a piece of research funded by Newcastle University looking at school-university transition and we would be really interested to hear about your experiences and opinions of school university transition so those making decisions can take these views into account and improve students' school-university transition experiences. Your views are really important as you are the ones at school/college doing the learning and making use of what you have learned to plan your future.

So that we (I) know your names, could we (I) ask you to write your first name on one of these labels and pin it on. Does everyone have a pen?

- * **Pause. Give out pens and labels as necessary.**

The reason we've got this group together is so that we can learn from you about the experiences of secondary/university transition.

The way we're finding out is by asking groups of young people to talk about their experience and views. We will also be asking other people like staff for their views.

You may not have been asked these kind of questions before and may want to think about them before speaking. Some of you may like to speak straightway. Either way it doesn't matter.

We will ask some questions about your learning, the courses you are taking, the choices you have made so far, and then look ahead to the future. Please join in the discussion and put your own views. Sometimes we will ask you to write down what you think to make sure everyone has the chance to give their views in case they prefer not to speak in front of others or did not make a point they wanted to.

Before we begin we need to note a few things:

- * **Press record**

First, we want to record the discussion to help us note all the points you make. It would be difficult to do this if we just took notes. The recording of our conversation will not be heard by anybody here at << >> and what you write will not be passed on to anyone outside the research team.

Second, we need to respect what each other says even if we don't always agree with each other. This means showing politeness and kindness to one another, so that everyone has a chance to express their views about learning.

Is it OK to record?

- * **If yes, continue (Ensure that consent is recorded).**
If no, switch off and take written notes.

We may use some of the points you make in a report to << >> and to the government agency. Sometimes we would like to use the words as you have said or written them but we will not tell anyone who said or wrote that particular thing.

Is it alright to use your words?

- * **If yes, continue (Ensure that consent is recorded).**

You only have to take part if you wish.

- * **Leavers go now.**

To start with, we ask you to sign a form saying you agree to take part and to fill in some information on the sheets we're (I'm) going to give you so we know a little bit about you. We do not need your name, just background information like your age and gender. This is so we can check that we have a wide range of young people's opinions.

Before we start talking together, can you complete Sheet 1 if you can. This will take a few minutes. If there's anything you're not sure about please ask.

- * **Hand out sheet 1.**

- * **Students fill in sheet 1**

Let's begin by going round the group and introducing ourselves.


Section 1


1. How did you expect university study and teaching to differ from study in secondary school? From whom, or from what experiences, did you develop those expectations?
2. Have your experiences of university study and teaching matched your expectations?
3. How would you define 'good teaching' in the university setting?
4. Have your work patterns and study habits changed in your first year?
5. At this stage, what forms of teaching (lectures, tutorials, discussion groups, demonstrations and so on) and what forms of assessment (essays, short exercises, tests) are most rewarding for you? What most helps you learn? What kind of feedback are you receiving, and what do you need?
6. What are the key differences you've experienced as a learner in the transition from Secondary school to first year?
7. What have you enjoyed about campus life and being a student? Is it what you expected it would be?
8. What have you not enjoyed about campus life and being a student? Are there problems or difficulties you did not expect?
9. If you did have problems with study, finances, deadlines and so on, do you know where to go for help?
10. Did you take part in any mentoring schemes, host schemes, orientation week activities, study and support groups, or academic orientation programs? Were they an effective introduction to student life? Are there other programs or forms of support you think you would have found more useful?
11. Have you, or any of your friends, or people you knew at school, experienced what you would call 'unsuccessful transitions'? How do you explain the problems? What could or should universities do to help students overcome those problems?
12. What kinds of technologies have you experienced in university teaching (from video and PowerPoint to on-line subjects or distance education)? How do they help or not help you learn? How effective are they, and what role should they play in university teaching?
13. Is there any other transition related issue you would like to talk about but perhaps were not given the opportunity earlier?

Newcastle University Transition Project

My agreement



This letter says that I understand what the project is about because I've understood the explanation I have been given. 

I also understand that the interview will be recorded and this is ok with me. 

PLEASE WRITE OR PRINT YOUR NAME HERE:

.....

Date

In this section, we are asking about you so we can check if we have taken into account the opinions of young people of different backgrounds and experience.

i) *Please tick one :*

Are you? Female Male

ii) What is your age?

Please tick one: 14 15 16 17 18 19

Other (please write in).....