

## Newcastle University Transition Research

### Focus Group Interviews – School / college students

#### Checklist

- \* **Sheets, 1, 2, 3 and 4. Sheet 1 includes written individual consent and background information.**
- \* **Tape recorder: prior to recording, record type of focus group, school/college location, date. Tape paused during writing periods.**

#### Introduction/protocols

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

Our names are << >> and we're from Newcastle University.

We are conducting a piece of research funded by our 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 your views into account and improve students' school-university transition experiences. Your views are really important as you are the ones most involved in the process.

So that we know your names, could we ask you to write your first name on one of these labels and stick 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 your experiences of transition to university. We are asking groups of university applicants to talk about their experience and views. We will also be asking some members of 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, but please give space for others to speak.

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:

**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 at this school / college 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.

Is it OK to record?

- \* **If yes, press record, and ensure that consent is recorded.  
If no, take written notes.**

We may use some of the points you make in a report to the university and the school / college. 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, so if you do not want to take part, please leave now.

- \* **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 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, and your applications to university.

Before we start talking together, can you complete Sheet 1. 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. Your names will not be included in the notes we make from this interview.

- \* **Introductions**

- \* **Start interview schedule**

### ***Interview schedule***

1. Have you taken part in any schemes to help your understanding of university life, or to enable you to transfer to studying effectively at university? Did they help you to understand student life?

**Prompt:** These might be: host schemes, open day activities, study and support groups, mentoring or academic orientation programs.

2. Do any activities here at school or elsewhere stand out as being particularly helpful in preparing you for university life?

3. Do any activities stand out as being particularly unhelpful in preparing you for university life?

4. Can you think of other programs or forms of support that you think would be useful?

### ***Pause for Sheet 2***

5. What learning activities are you mostly involved with at school / college?

6. What helps you to learn best? **Probe** for a range of responses.

5. Do you know what types of study skills are required for university level study?

6. Do you know the range of learning situations offered at University [e.g. self motivated, group, lectures?] Is this different from how you learn at present?

7. Do you know the level of knowledge and skill required for the course of study you have applied for?

### ***Pause for Sheet 3***

9. What are your main concerns/worries about going to university?

10. Have you had the opportunity to discuss these with anyone? If so who? If no, would you have liked the opportunity to talk to someone about them?

11. Is there any other transition related issue you would like to talk about but perhaps were not given the opportunity earlier?


### ***Give time for Sheet 4***


# CONSENT FORM SHEET 1

## Newcastle University Transition Project

### My agreement



This sheet 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 for a small amount of background information about you.

i) *Please tick one :*

Are you? Female  Male

ii) What is your age?

iii) Have you applied to University this year?

iv) Are you currently holding an offer / a place at University? If so, which one/s?

v) Are you intending to apply for University in the future?

vi) Did either of your parents / carers go to University? If yes, which one/s?

vii) Have you a brother or sister who has been to University?

Thank you.

You will be asked to fill in Sheets 2, 3 and 4 during pauses in the discussion, to make sure that you are able to tell us everything you would like to say.

**SHEET 2** This sheet is to help you to summarise the ideas you have discussed, or to add things that you did not get the chance to say.



1. Have you taken part in any schemes to help your understanding of university life, or to enable you to transfer to studying effectively at university? Did they help you to understand student life?

2. Do any activities here at school or elsewhere stand out as being particularly helpful in preparing you for university life?

3. Do any activities stand out as being particularly unhelpful in preparing you for university life?

4. Can you think of other programs or forms of support that you think would be useful?

**SHEET 3** This sheet is to help you to summarise the ideas you have discussed, or to add things that you did not get the chance to say.



5. What learning activities are you mostly involved with at school / college?

6. What helps you to learn best?

5. Do you know what types of study skills are required for university level study?

6. Do you know the range of learning situations offered at University  
Is this different from how you learn at present?

7. Do you know the level of knowledge and skill required for the course of study you have applied for?

**SHEET 4** This sheet is to help you to summarise the ideas you have discussed, or to add things that you did not get the chance to say.



9. What are your main concerns/worries about going to university?

10. Have you had the opportunity to discuss these with anyone? If so who? If no, would you have liked the opportunity to talk to someone about them?

11. Is there any other transition related issue you would like to tell us about?

Thank you for helping with our investigation. We hope that you enjoy your University programme.