

Worked Example

G: Focus/discussion group schedules

These examples have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

G1: University of Brighton - first year undergraduates with disabilities

Welcome

Introduction – [from the researchers]

Explanation about the focus group – aims:

- To find out what information sources work best when communicating support messages to disabled students before, during and after application
- To discover what key messages might encourage students to access (early) support
- To explore reasons why students might choose not to access support from the university and whether these barriers could be removed

Permission to tape [consent form & data form]

Something about confidentiality and disclosing personal data – we are not expecting you to give details of your disability or personal situation, but anything that you do mention is completely anonymous. Invite people to speak freely as part of an open dialogue.

1. General introductions – who is who, and what course they are studying

2. Deciding to go to university

- 2.1 Why did you end up at Brighton/Eastbourne/Hastings? Was it the course, city, entry requirements, social scene...?
- 2.2 Did you visit the university on an open day or for an interview?
- 2.3 Did you consider disability support at this stage? Did it affect your choice in any way?

3. If you did think about disability support at the application stage:

- 3.1 What information did you seek before applying to university in relation to your disability?
- 3.2 Were you able to find this information? Where from and how easy was it? How could we improve it?
- 3.3 Did you feel confident about the university's ability to support your disability?
- 3.4 Was there information missing? Could we improve anything?

4. Declaring on your application form?

- 4.1 Did you apply through UCAS?
- 4.2 Did you declare your disability on your application form (any entry route)? Why – what encouraged or discouraged you?
- 4.3 If you didn't declare your disability on your application, how did you let the university know? At what stage?
- 4.4 After telling the university about a disability, what happened next? Did you feel confident that the system was working? Were you kept informed?

5. Making contact with the Disability and Dyslexia Team

- 5.1 Reasons as to why students do or do not contact D&DT (prompts:)
- Do you know what they do?
 - What do you think are the benefits of contacting them?
 - What do you think are the drawbacks?
 - Do you know how to contact them?
- 5.2 Did your family/friends/any others influence your decision to contact or not contact the team?

6. Automated emails

- 6.1 Did you receive them?
- 6.2 Did they go into inbox or spam?
- 6.3 Did you respond to them? Why?
- 6.4 Did they contain the most useful information? Were they the right length? Did they feel impersonal?
- 6.5 Are there other methods of communication that we could use that you think you would pay attention to? What would work better?
- 6.6 What would have caught your attention and encouraged you to talk to us? Is there anything else we could have done?

7. Disabled Students' Allowances

- 7.1 Were you aware of how disabled students at the university were funded?
- 7.2 How did you receive information about the DSA (or have you not?)
- 7.3 Do you know if you are eligible?
- 7.4 Have you applied? What stage are you at? If you didn't apply – why not?
- 7.5 Did you access support from the D&DT in your application or did you do it separately?
- 7.6 Is there more the university could do to encourage students to apply?

8. Do you have any other comments about disclosure, information or communication?

- 8.1 Have you heard anything else about the D&DT through word of mouth etc?

Thank you

Feedback from the session – would anyone like to know what outcomes come from this evaluation?

G2: University of York, Maths Skills Centre – second year students (from target departments)

- Thanks for coming, help yourself to food/ drink
- I am [name of researcher], the facilitator for this session on your experience in the first year of your courses.
- All the information gathered today will be anonymised and treated in confidence. Please respect the confidentiality of the other people here today by not repeating anything you have heard today outside of here.
- This research has been instigated by the Maths Support service, which has started this year. It is part of a bigger project to develop evaluation methods for various student services across the university which in turn will feed into a national project.
- If you want a summary of the findings, then feel free to leave me your email address at the end and I can arrange for this next year.
- I think you are all now in your second year, but this session is interested in your experiences in the first year. You are all from different courses across the university but may have had similar experiences during your first year.

Background

- If we can start with some background information. How did you decide what course to study at university?
- Thinking back to the first year, were there any elements of the course which you hadn't anticipated?
- What did you find hard in the first year?

Maths experience?

- Ok, so moving onto Maths. What was Maths like at school?
- What level did you study it to?
- Were there any aspects you found hard in Maths at school?
- What areas did you find easy?

University experience

- What did you expect your Maths courses to be like in the first year?
- How did they compare?
- What areas did you find hard?
- Were there any areas you found easy?
- Were there any dedicated Maths modules? How did you find them?
- How did these modules compare to other modules in the first year?
- What were the methods of teaching Maths?
- How were the Maths elements assessed?
- How did you deal with any difficulties in completing the Maths modules?
- How has the Maths in the first year linked to the second year?

Thanks for your time.