

# Financial support evaluation toolkit: interview questions

## Recommended statement to include on your research information/consent sheet

[Name of institution] is keen to find out how students support themselves financially during their studies. We also want to know how useful and helpful our bursary and scholarship packages (sometimes including discount vouchers for housing, transport etc.) are in supporting students who may otherwise have to leave the course or do less well in their studies. We want your views on what you used this financial support for in **the last academic year (i.e. XXXX-XX)** even if you are not in receipt of any form of scholarship or bursary this year.

## Interview framework

The purpose for each area of questions is shown in red italic text for the interviewer's use.

### Journey into higher education (the past)

*Exploring the overall role and importance of family, school, friends, outreach, open days etc.*

Can you tell me a little about how you made the decision to study this course at this particular higher education provider? I am interested in knowing who helped you to make the decision to apply, and where and what to study?

*Exploring how the costs of higher education are perceived including value of a degree in to the future.*

Thinking about the costs of higher education, what if anything did you find out about costs or finances before you applied? (Who if anyone discussed this with you? How did you find out other information about cost and finances? What did you feel or think about the overall cost of getting a degree once you found out about the costs of studying?)

*Exploring awareness of additional support available.*

Did anyone talk to you about additional funds for studying, such as a bursary or scholarship before you applied? (Or did you find this information out in other ways? Or was it perhaps something you knew nothing about? Had you even heard of the terms bursary or scholarship? Did you think you might be eligible?)

*If the student knew about financial support before they enrolled: exploring the extent to which additional financial support played a pivotal role in decision making.*

How important was the financial support available to you at this university in helping you make the decision to come here? Do you think you would have still come if that financial support had not been offered?

**OR**

*If the student did not know about financial support before they enrolled: exploring how unexpected additional financial support is perceived.*

How did you find out you were eligible for additional financial support? What were your first thoughts when you found out? Do you know why you are eligible? How does that make you feel?

## **Being in higher education (the present)**

*Exploring feelings about being the recipient of additional financial support.*

How did it feel when you first got your additional financial support? Did you tell others about it or keep it to yourself - and why?

*Exploring the value of financial support in more detail.*

Have you spent it/used it on anything particular? (If so what and why did you make that choice?) Would you prefer it if your bursary/scholarship was in the form of cash? (if support is in kind)/ was support in kind rather than cash? Why is that?

*Exploring the impact on financial support in detail.*

What difference, if any, has having the additional financial support made to you? What would be different - maybe socially or academically or in other ways - if you did not have this support? Has it made the difference between staying or, perhaps, thinking of leaving? What has the specific importance been - if anything?

## **Being in higher education (the future)**

*Further reflections on the impact of financial support.*

Will you use your financial support differently next year? (if so, why would that be?) Is there a chance you will not be eligible? If so why not, and what do you think the implications would be for you if that were to happen?

*Informing institutional practice.*

Do you think your own university has got its financial support right? Why do you think that? What might be done differently? What advice would you give to a university thinking of developing a financial support package based on your own experiences?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the impact of financial support on you?

Thank you for your time.