



**J2089 OfS Male participation in nursing and allied health  
Potential Students - Discussion Guide Stage 2<sup>1</sup>**

**The overall research objectives are to:**

- To map out and benchmark male participation in nursing and allied health subjects against other relevant subjects (e.g. other healthcare subjects, sciences) and in the context of different subject areas more generally;
- To review and synthesise existing insight with regards to barriers to male participation in nursing and allied health subjects and initiatives aiming to reduce the gender gap, as well as identify any gaps that need to be addressed through further research;
- To explore awareness, perceptions, behaviours and preferences of potential students with regards to study and career decision-making in general, and nursing and allied health subjects in particular;
- To identify messages, imagery, interventions, policies and practice that appeal to potential male students and can help increase male participation in nursing and allied health professions.

**Stimulus:**

- A. Nursing and allied health careers
- B. Perceived benefits and drawbacks of these careers
- C. Positioning nursing and allied health subjects
- D. Imagery of nursing and allied health subjects
- E. Marketing and information materials
- F. Interventions
- G. Formats and channels

**1. Introduction and warm up (3-5mins)**

*This section reiterates information about the research project, research sponsor and research agency that have been communicated at the recruitment stage.*

Introduce self and Research Works Limited, an independent market research agency. The research is being conducted on behalf of the Office for Students. The objective is to understand how students make decisions about the subjects they study and their future careers and their views on particular courses and careers.

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<sup>1</sup> This guide was adapted for interviews with other audiences (current students, parents, teachers, university staff, stakeholders) to cover similar questions from their point of view and include additional questions specific to those audiences.

- Explain confidentiality (Data Protection Act and Market Research Society code of conduct) and ask permission to record the interview
- Invite any questions about the research process
- Ask respondent to briefly introduce themselves – name, age, what course/year they are on, hobbies and interests

## **2. Audience context: decision-making when choosing study subjects (5mins)**

*This section will explore respondents' 'journey' in terms of their educational and career decision-making to get some broad contextual data.*

Moderator to explain that we'll first discuss briefly how they chose what to study and any thoughts they had on what they might do in the future.

- [Ask for the level they're at] What GCSE/A level/BTEC subjects do you study?
- What was important to you when choosing subjects (at that level)?
- [For A level/BTEC only] Was that similar/different when choosing your GCSE subjects?
- And have you thought about your future job or a career you may like?
  - Which jobs/careers have you considered over time? Why and how did you get interested in them?
  - And which careers/sectors would you never consider? Why?
  - Did you look for any information about what you'd need to study/do to get into the careers you're interested in? Where did you look?
  - Did you speak to anyone about this? Who? What did they say? What did that make you think/feel?
- Have you ever considered any careers in healthcare?
  - If so, which? Why were you interested in them? Has how you feel about them changed and why?
  - If not, why do you think you never considered careers in health?

## **3. Perceptions of nursing and allied health (5mins)**

*The aim of this section will be to explore respondents' views on nursing and allied health.*

Moderator to check if respondents watched the 2 videos for their pre-task and explore in reference to videos:

- What did you think about the videos you watched?
- What did the nursing video make you think about nursing? Why do you say that?
  - Was anything in the video new/surprising to you? Why?

- Did you see anything interesting or attractive about nursing? What/why do you say that?
- What did the video about allied health professions make you think about working in those careers? Why do you say that?
  - Were you aware of the term allied health professions before?
  - Which of these professions were you aware of?
  - Was anything in the video new/surprising to you? Why?
  - Did you see anything interesting or attractive about particular allied health careers? What/why do you say that?

Show *Stimulus A – nursing and allied health careers*

- What did you know about nursing before you watched the video? About what nurses do? Different areas of nursing? What skills and qualities nurses have?
  - How would you feel about working as a nurse? Why do you say that?

Refer to allied health professions they were aware of

- What did you know about them before watching the video?
  - About what they do? What skills and qualities they have?

#### **Perceived positives and negatives of these careers**

Show *Stimulus B – perceived benefits and drawbacks of these careers and explore:*

- Having found out more about nursing and allied health from the videos, which of these do you see as positives of working in these careers? *Moderator to show Stimulus B – positives and negatives – and probe:*
  - Why are they positives for you?
  - Are any of these negatives for you? Why?

#### **4. Communications: messaging, imagery, formats and channels (20-25mins depths; 35mins groups)**

*The aim of this section will be to explore respondents' views on marketing nursing and allied health courses.*

Explain there are fewer men than women who study and work in nursing and many allied health careers. This is why we would like to understand how these subjects and careers could be better promoted generally but particularly to male students

- What would be important to say to boys to encourage them to consider careers in nursing/allied health careers? Why that? What difference could that make?

## **Positioning nursing and allied health (broad themes)**

Moderator to explain that we will now show them some very broad themes that could be used to introduce nursing or allied health courses and careers to potential students. For example, these could be used as a headline for a campaign or university webpages about these courses. Moderator to lay out all the themes (Stimulus C – positioning nursing and allied health subjects), give respondents some time to look at them and explore:

- Which of these stand out to you, if any? Why do they stand out?
  - What does that make you think/feel? Why?
  - What are they saying about nursing/allied health careers?
- Which of these are most appealing as reasons to study nursing/allied health? Why?
  - Would this be the same or different for male and female students? Why?
- Which are less appealing? Why?
  - Would this be the same or different for male and female students? Why?
- Is there anything else that could encourage potential male students to study nursing/allied health professions (as relevant)?
- Refer back to specific barriers they had for considering nursing or allied health careers: Do any of these make you re-consider your reasons for not being interested in nursing or allied health careers?
  - Is there anything that could help overcome those reasons for not considering these careers? What? How would that help?

## **Imagery**

Moderator to lay out all of Stimulus D – imagery of nursing and allied health subjects and explore as follows:

- What do these images make you think/feel?
- What in here, if anything, stood out to you? Probe: as most relevant, appealing, important, off-putting?
- Which of these are most appealing as reasons to study nursing/allied health? Why?
  - Would this be different for male and female students? Why?
- Which are less appealing? Why?
  - Would this be different for male and female students? Why?
- Are there any other images that would be important to include to encourage male students to consider careers in nursing/allied health? What would they need to show? What difference would that make?

## **Marketing materials**

Lay out *Stimulus E – marketing and information materials about nursing and/or particular allied health courses* batch by batch, show websites/videos where included, and explore as follows:

- What in here, if anything, stood out to you? Probe: as most relevant, appealing, important, off-putting?
  - What does that make you think/feel?
- Which of these are most appealing in terms of giving reasons to study nursing/allied health? Why?
  - Would this be different for male and female students? Why?
  - [As appropriate<sup>2</sup>] Would it be different for different groups of male students? Probe: school leavers and mature students, male students from different parts of the country, male students from different ethnicities?
- Which are less appealing? Why?
  - Would this be different for male and female students? Why?
- Is anything important missing in here? What? What would you want to know next?
  - [If students mention information on how to finance their studies, explore the following] Where do you go to find information on that? What information needs to be provided on how to finance your studies?
- Is there anything that is unclear?
- Refer back to specific barriers they had for considering nursing or allied health careers: Do any of these make you re-consider your reasons for not being interested in nursing or allied health careers?
  - Is there anything that could help overcome those reasons for not considering these careers? What? How would that help?
- Is there anything else that could encourage potential male students to study nursing/allied health professions (as relevant)?

#### **5. Interventions, policies and practice (20-25mins depths; 35mins groups)**

*This section will explore respondents' views on potential interventions, policies and practice that could encourage potential male students to consider nursing and allied health careers.*

- Have you ever been given any information or advice on careers in nursing and allied health? Probe: in school, through work experience, at university open days etc.?
  - If so, what did that involve? Who was targeted?
  - What worked well/less well about promoting nursing/allied health in that way? Why?

Moderator to explain there are different ways in which nursing and allied health careers could be promoted and we'd like to understand their views on what would work best.

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<sup>2</sup> Moderator note: Keep this question in mind wherever relevant - if issues regarding differences between men (and particularly age and ethnicity) come up, then please explore to understand what the different barriers, motivations or needs may be.

Show *Stimulus F – interventions* [in batches] (e.g. school initiatives, university initiatives, role models, employer initiatives) and explore:

- For each of the potential interventions:
  - How interesting would that be to you?
  - How useful would that be? Why?
  - How could that work? How would it need to work to be useful? Why? Probe for how it would work using the questions on the slides – really important to get practical ideas for how they'd want that to work.
  - When is the right time to do that? Probe: what school year, why then?
  - What would be important to consider to engage male students with nursing/allied health in this way? Why is that important?
- Do you have any other suggestions for potential activities to encourage male students to apply to nursing/allied health courses?
  - How could that work?
  - What difference would that make?

Where male-only initiatives are discussed above, explore with female students specifically:

- If these initiatives targeted specifically male students to attract them to nursing/allied health, how would you feel about that?
  - How would you feel about that as a female student? Probe: if seeing a campaign targeting only men to go into nursing/allied health, if seeing there is a career event or course just for men to attract them to these careers?
  - Is there anything to consider there in terms of how female students may feel about that? What and why?

### **Formats and channels**

- What would be the best way to tell you about nursing/allied health university courses and opportunities in those careers?
- What formats and channels would work best for this information? Moderator to listen out for spontaneous responses, then show *Stimulus G – formats and channels* and explore physical and online places one at a time:
- Which of these would work best to reach you with any information or promotion of nursing and allied health subjects and careers? Why?
- [For those seen as effective] How could nursing and allied health be promoted through that channel?
  - What would that involve? Probe as appropriate to the channel<sup>3</sup>: events, posters, leaflets, videos, booklets. What format would work best?
  - What would you like to hear about? What should they highlight about these careers to interest you?

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<sup>3</sup> School and university activities don't need to be explored here in much detail as explored before.

- Who would you want to see promoting these careers? Probe: gender, age, student or professional?
- Are any important places/channels missed here that could be used? What are they? How could they be used? Why would that be important to do?

## **6. Summing up (5mins)**

*This section asks respondents for final thoughts on the subject*

- Thinking about everything we discussed:
  - What 3 things you heard or saw today have most potential to encourage male students to study nursing/allied health university courses? Why?
    - Are there any actions that would be easy to take but could successfully attract more men to these subjects?
    - What are they? How would they work? Why do you think they could be successful?
  - Was there anything that you learnt that you would like to act upon or share? What was that? What would you do/who would you share this with? Why?
  - What else is most important to consider/change/do to encourage male students to study nursing/allied health university courses? Why that?

**Thank respondents and close**