

## Information for Participants (Current/Former PhD Students)

Thank you for your interest in this research project looking into which types of PhD programmes or features of PhD programmes in STEM lead to the most supported and satisfied students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds in the UK. This research project is being run by the [Martingale Foundation](#), incubated by [Purposeful Ventures](#) (charity no. 1204622). Martingale exists to support a new generation of postgraduates to become STEM leaders.

### **What is the research project?**

We want to learn more about how those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds experience support across different PhD programme types.

The research project involves two stages. The first stage involves selected participants taking part in one of three focus groups with 6-10 current/former PhD students with the potential for a follow-up one-to-one interview with project lead Sophie Bird (Programme Officer at the Martingale Foundation). The second stage being an online survey using Microsoft Forms.

During the focus groups and one-to-one interviews notes will be taken by a member of the Martingale Team to capture responses from participants.

### **Who are we looking for?**

We are looking for participants who meet the following criteria:

- Current PhD students in a STEM field who have completed **at least two years** of PhD study AND are from a low-socioeconomic background who have UK 'Home Fee' status for their PhD programme
- Former PhD students who undertook their PhD in a STEM field (either completed PhD or left PhD study) from a low-socioeconomic background who had UK 'Home Fee' status during their PhD programme

### **How we define low-socioeconomic backgrounds:**

We will not be formally verifying that participants meet these criteria. However, at the Martingale Foundation, we classify low-socioeconomic as those whose family income is, or was, £35,000 or less during the PhD programme and/or the three years before the PhD programme. Those who may be from low-socioeconomic backgrounds may also meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Eligible for free school meals at any point during your schooling years:** This means you have received free school meals in England, Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland at any time. It also includes receipt of funding via the School Meals Scheme in the Republic of Ireland.
- **Care-experienced:** This means you have spent time in local authority care for at least three months or more, including foster care, residential care, kinship care as a formal agreement with the local authority or living at home under the supervision of the local authority.

- **You have been an informal carer e.g. unpaid/non-professional carer for a family member, friend or neighbour:** You are caring or have cared for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or addiction, cannot cope without your support.
- **You are or were estranged from your parents or guardians:** the situation is permanent, and you had/have had no contact or communications with your parents, step-parents, guardians or carers for at least a year. You will have been assessed as independent by Student Finance or funding bodies during your undergraduate study.
- **You have been considered statutorily homeless:** This means you have qualified for assistance under your local authority's 'main homelessness duty'.
- **You are a refugee, stateless person or asylum seeker:**
  - **Refugee:** You have fled your country and are seeking protection because of a fear of being persecuted due to your race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. You have been given permission to stay in the UK and granted official 'refugee' status.
  - **Stateless person:** You are not recognised as a citizen of any country and unable to live permanently in other country.
  - **Asylum seeker:** You have applied for refugee status and are waiting to find out if it has been granted. You must have left your country and be unable to go back due to fear of persecution.

We understand that socioeconomic background is multifaceted, and the criteria above does not necessarily capture all those who come from a low-socioeconomic background. Therefore, please use this as a guide to decide whether you identify as low-socioeconomic rather than a required checklist to be able to participate.

### **Amazon gift voucher**

Participants who take part in a focus group and/or interview will receive a £20 Amazon gift voucher as a thank you for the time and effort given. The Amazon gift voucher will be sent to participants who take part in a focus group and/or interview via the email address provided by the participant.

### **If you change your mind**

Participation at all stages is **voluntary**.

It is perfectly acceptable if you feel that you don't want to answer any specific questions – you can either skip the particular question in the survey or contact Sophie to discuss if the question requires an answer in order to submit the survey. In the focus groups and interviews, inform Sophie if you do not want to answer the question, and we will move on.

Your participation will be anonymous - your name, and any identifiable data will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Please refer to the Privacy Notice for further information.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the research project, please contact Sophie Bird (Programme Officer at the Martingale Foundation) on [sophie.bird@martingale.foundation](mailto:sophie.bird@martingale.foundation)