F: Okay, so, my name is Heather. I’m going to be facilitating the focus group. If you’d just like to introduce yourselves for me.

P1: I’m P1

P2: I’m P2

F: Fantastic. Thank you. So, as you know, the project that I’m working on is about widening participating and diversity in Medical Education, so, I just wanted to start off by sort of thinking about trying to find out what you guys know about widening participation in Higher Education in general, like is it a term that you’ve ever heard before?

P2: Yeah.

F: Yeah. What do you think it means and what do you understand about it?

P2: I mean like at our school, seven people applied for Medicine; I’m the only one that’s actually made it into Medical School. All those people, most of us applied for BM6, so, like going through the Widening Participation stream, because of the criteria; everyone’s come from like an ethnic minority, like coming from a State school, I also had a postcode which isn’t exactly from an affluent area. So, the whole widening participating thing, it’s like trying to make sure that the medical community reflects the patients that they’re treating. Because like, especially historically, it’s like White men, and it’s more upper-class, middle-class people, you were like there’s more like diversity, but it’s still quite like elite kind of small group of people who like dominate it, so.

F: Yeah.

P1: I think I agree; that’s what I know about it. I don’t really know was from; I’ve never known anyone who was from like that kind of area or who applied for BM6 before I came here. And I don’t know, I’m quite interested to see what it’s like, and what makes you qualify for such a thing, because I’m not really aware of it myself.

F: Do you think it’s important to have widening participation in university in general, or in Medicine?

P1: Definitely. I think most people who don’t have access to anything, well say, people in BM5 and then people just in general, lots of people, have private school education or a lot of support and spoon-feeding, in terms of what makes them the right person to do Medicine, so, therefore, they’ll get in more easily, just because of being at the right school or.

P2: The system is rigged in their favour, because

P1: Yeah.

P2: Obviously like there’s, UKCAT, and then, for example UKCAT like one of my friends also applied, and she was like one of the few people I know who went to private school, I come from a State school and all my friends are from State schools, like coming here is like, finally like welcome to the World of like the middle-class. And I never would consider myself like the working-class, I come from a relatively middle-class family, but like I’m from London, so, it’s a bit different, but like, she had, like the school would run UKCAT tutoring sessions, and they had like doctors come in, and she’s seen surgery, and none of my mates didn’t even get work-experience, because no-one knows anyone who, I don’t know anyone in the medical field, at all, none of my friends did at all, so, we got jobs, like I worked as a receptionist for Macmillan, in the Oncology Ward for two years, but I know people who’ve gone in and seen C-sections, just because they’re like a mate’s dad, is like a doctor.

P1: Yeah, literally

P2: I mean like I don’t begrudge them like exploiting the opportunities they have, because like one of my friends, her dad’s a nurse, so, like she exploited that massively, like followed him around, but it was just harder.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, like widening participation, I think it’s really important, and like yeah, to qualify, it’s, I think it does help, but still even widening participation, I thought it made us equal perhaps, so, I’ll come, I like knowing more about like kind of the education and kind of it’s easier, but I still don’t think it goes far enough, because it’s just so hard. UKCAT training, the interview process; nothing, like my school had no idea, no-one goes to Medical School from my school, no-one applies. Like, that, and the fact that like our grades were lower, but my school were still like, yeah, it’s a good State school, so, we didn’t get the full.

P1: But there is still, in terms of grammar schools as well, like people who are from a poorer area, sometimes like, they’re still really, like they’ve gone to like the best school around that is a grammar school and not a private school, so, they might not have had as much support as well, but at the same time, they’re still going to like make up for it with grades, and it’s really hard to tell.

P2: Yeah.

P1: It’s a good school. In different places, the exact corrections you need to make, because you can have those schools that are everyone really thinks that’s like the brightest school around, but still the people who should be getting into Medicine are getting B, B, C, or something like that.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Just because of lack of support and lack of everything, well most things that they need, but then at the same time they are the people who are really like should be getting into Medicine.

P2: Yeah. I mean also I went to school which had an intake of like, relatively like intelligent kids, so, we did relatively well compared to the rest of the Country, but it wasn’t because of like the teaching or people had tutoring, like I know how to, I didn’t actually get grades to get to Medical School, I got two As and a B, so, I was really lucky that Southampton turned around and said, come here anyway, because I was after three As, but I got into Queen Mary’s and Sheffield as well, so, this wasn’t my first choice, this way my backup. But like, yeah, it’s just, it’s hard. And also, I think I’ve come to like this university in the South, and also outside of London, it’s like different to what I expected. But you also go to university to meet everyone, I thought I’d meet like everyone on my level. I realised I’ve actually just met people who are like higher up in the food-chain, well not in the food-chain, like, so I didn’t really think how much social class affects people in this Country, but actually it’s quite relevant and prevalent. I don’t know, it’s kind of [???]

P1: I think it’s different now we’re at Uni. I think we’re, obviously we’re aware that there are richer people. I think it doesn’t make us like less friends with other people. Or often, we’re just becoming friends with people who are around us in the World, who we’re used to at home, or something like that.

P2: Yeah.

P1: And so, just by chance, well that’s probably something to do with it, but we are then making, like becoming good friends with the people who are on our level anyway.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Or very similarly. Whereas, and I don’t think that we treat people differently in the course.

P2: No, not at all, not at all, because of that. But then as you say, you’re still, because everyone is on a medical course, they’ll be like, I don’t actually know what the percentage of private school educated is, or like at all. I think it doesn’t really matter, because we’re all here now.

P1: Yeah

P2: But like, just like different expectations, like the teaching, and like the type of people on the course. Also, because I did plan to go to Queen Mary’s, which is East London, which is where I’m like originally from. The course is, in my opinion, a lot more diverse, in terms of ethnicity and background, compared to coming down here, but at the same time, the kind of people on our course are like the population of Southampton, I don’t know, I’d say we are diverse. I don’t know.

P1: Yeah, it is quite diverse, I think, like.

P2: I don’t actually know, where are you from?

P1: Well I’m from X

P2: Okay, I’ve not heard of it.

P1: So, like Y. Have you heard of Y?

P2: Oh yeah, no, I’ve heard of the racecourse at Y.

P1: Yeah. So, I’m from that area, admittedly a nicer part than Y but so I am kind of realising that I’m coming from the, more of the direction of the people who you’re mentioning,

P2: Yeah.

P1: In my, I am kind of coming to this because I was really interested to see what the widening access thing was about. And I thought you know, having someone who is not really aware of it, might be quite an interesting perspective to have, in the discussion, because I’ve had like all that support that you mentioned.

P2: Yeah.

P1: And it didn’t, I mean I got an offer from Southampton and nowhere else.

P2: Yeah.

P1: And I had quite a lot of support, and so, I kind of feel like I deserve a lot less than the people who have had no support, and they’ve got like three offers, because I sort of think like.

P2: Yeah, but I didn’t get the grades, so, I feel it’s been at bit like I literally don’t deserve to be here, because I got a B in Chemistry, which is like the one you need.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And just like everyone around me seems to have got A\*, but it’s like also, I came into it feeling like, even though like I got offers from lots of schools, I just did really really well on UKCAT, I was really lucky.

P1: Yeah.

P2: I was the only one who made it. Despite the fact that most people who applied, seven of us applied, five of us got offers, but I’m the only one who got grades, and I didn’t technically get the grades.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, like, I suppose you could like say is that the fault of the teaching at my school? Quite possibly, it did a bit.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But it’s like, yeah. So, you went to, so sometimes you feel like you don’t deserve it, because you got so much help, and I think that because I didn’t.

P1: Twenty-four people applied, twenty-four people applied, twenty-four got offers, nineteen got in.

P2: What?!

P1: Exactly. So, we’re like, completely different in that respect.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Like we had so much support. Lots of people, their predicted grades were just given to them, because it would give them Medicine. Lots of people, their personal statement was really written for them by the teacher who does, applies for Medicine, who gets people into Medicine. Mine wasn’t, mine was, I was adamant that I’d write mine myself, but a lot of people didn’t have that adamantness.

P2: Yeah, no, we got ours read, and corrected, but we helped each other.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But, like.

P1: So, we read through it, we’d ask people about it, and I think mine was quite different to a lot of other peoples’, and you could tell that the teacherness of the reading of it, but obviously the Uni doesn’t care about that, so.

P2: Yeah, I don’t know. Like, I mean, also, I think coming here I think guys, do guys outnumber girls on our course, or do we outnumber them, because at my school only girls applied, no guys applied, not a single guy.

P1: Two guys applied from mine.

P2: Yeah, it was really like, you’re a girl.

F: Out of twenty-four!

P1: Yeah.

P2: Like all the girls applied, and it sounds, because like out the group, even though like I said I come from a State school, my family’s not exactly like balling, and, but out of the group, I’d probably say I came from like more supportive family, not in terms of like, well like love and stuff, but like just financially, because out of the group, I’m White British, the others are, one is from a Chinese background, there was A, who is Somalian, there was, B is Korean, and then C and D are Indian, and who was, someone else, but I can’t think of her name, but like I just felt bad getting in, because I was like oh it’s such a stereotype: I come from like a middle-class family, a more White family, I was born here.

P1: Yeah.

P2: It was just like, I just felt like that helped.

F: So, continuing with this diversity discussion, do you know the different types of Medical Degree Programmes that we have here? So, you mentioned the BM6.

P2: BM6.

F: You’re BM5.

P2: And 4, being here.

F: And do you know what the differences are, and well how you get onto those Programmes, and if there is any difference in their content?

P1: BM4 is like graduate entry, so you have to get quite high.

P2: Those first two years are quite condensed. Oh yeah, I think they get like a one in twelve chance of getting in at undergraduate, it’s like a one in thirty chance as a postgrad.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Lots of postgrads actually apply for an undergraduate course.

P1: Yeah, if they’re in BM5.

F: Yeah.

P2: I think it’s just their first two years, so, our first two years is their first year, they condense it, they like join up with the year above us.

P1: Yeah.

P2: BM(EU) is the German, so you spend two years here and then go back, but actually a lot of those are British people.

P1: And there’s are slightly lower requirements.

P2: Yes, so, I, not to like put any shame on anyone who does BM(EU), but I know some people who are British, but because their mums are German, they applied to the German Programme when they didn’t get the grades to come to the BM5.

P1: Yeah, so, E did.

P2: Yeah, E did it, and F did it as well.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, yeah, which I find like interesting. Like, I don’t know how many German, but I was going to go and apply to Ireland if I didn’t get in here.

F: Okay.

P2: I didn’t get in, because they don’t have an interview process. Yeah, it’s really weird, you do the HPAC, which is their UKCAT, and then you send your grades off and then you either get in or you don’t, so, it wouldn’t have worked because I didn’t get the grades. Which is why they all let me in, they were, you did well at interview. I was like, thank you.

F: Would you say that you, do you interact with students from different Programmes a lot?

P1: I’ve just never been aware of it. I have never been, never thought, oh it’s that’s the thing, I’ve just always thought, everyone is on this course, like that makes them doing Medicine, like I don’t care whether you’re a BM5, BM(EU), or BM6, like.

P2: No-one mentions it.

P1: No, it’s...

P2: I think apart from everyone who is speaking German, you’ll instantly know they’re probably on a BM(EU) course, but like it doesn’t, I mean apart from BM4, I don’t know anyone on BM4, because we don’t see them, do we?

P1: No.

P2: Do we?

P1: No.

P2: No, not at all. But BM6, BM5 and BM(EU).

P1: I would say some BM6 people, are, just have their life together, and I don’t.

P2: They study different to us!

P1: And so, they just like, they already know how to work, they already know what’s going on. Some of them, like, are living in a house, they have control of their life, and so, I find that quite nice, but it does make, it does make me like hang out with them less maybe, because they’re like, I go out a fair bit more than lots of BM6 people.

P2: But they don’t live in halls, so it’s less likely. But some are doing re-sits from last year, who, IMSU people and stuff, I was like I’ve literally never seen you. They’re like, well I didn’t come to any of the lectures, because I did it last year. And like they live in houses, with like the second years and such, but I don’t think there’s really any differences?

P1: No.

P2: Most people, I do think are BM5 though.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Because that’s the majority, right.

P1: I think that’s just how people are. So, like in our, in the kind of groups that have emerged, friendshiply, they’re predominantly, like just you are friends with the people who are similar to you. And so, I don’t really find I’m that similar to them, quite a lot of the BM6 people, but that isn’t because I don’t like them, but it’s more just because we have like different things, people have different things in common. So, just, in general, I don’t really know.

F: So, you talked about how they study differently and seem to have like a bit more control; why do you think that is, what’s going on?

P1: I think because they’ve had a year to get their head around it, get their head, like I was so used to, my mum then asking me, oh have you done your work today, have you done work or what have you done, like, whereas, and so coming to Uni, the first term especially, I was like I’m sure I’ll get back and I might do a bit. Exactly, I was like, my mum is not here to make me work, so why should I work. Whereas BM6 people, have that already sussed out maybe because of last year’s exams.

P2: And I think also like, generally, like this is like a massive stereotype, especially coming from my friendship group, out of my friendship group, my friends who came from like, they’re like minority immigrants, their parents put a lot more pressure on them to work hard. So, they will study because they were like, they felt more, not pressure to, but also like a need to. Whereas, like it was kind of more relaxed. I suppose, well like my mum’s mentality is no-one owes you anything, so, if you choose not to work, that’s your problem, when you get to eighteen you still have to move out and do something with your life, so, if you’ve chosen to fail your A-Levels, that’s not our problem, that’s your problem now. So, like I suppose it was more like, do yourself proud, because no-one else is like going to help you out.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, that’s why I work, but I suppose yeah, making a stereotype of like the people on BM6 do come from more minority backgrounds, maybe it’s just a different mentality?

P1: Yeah. I think there definitely is a different mentality.

P2: Like work harder sort of.

P1: I think they like push themselves, sometimes less, but their parents have like given them the drive.

P2: Just like a different work ethic isn’t it?

P1: Yeah. Yeah, so, I was at a grammar school near W, and so lots and lots of people, I was like the only one in my class, who like I would say I’m pretty self-driven. I know, I said my mum asked me about work, but she won’t make me do it, she would just ask me about it.

F: Yeah.

P1: And to kind of expect me to have done it. And I thought I was like relatively self-driven, sort of compared to most other people, whose parents would tell them, like they’re not getting things if they haven’t done that, they haven’t got the grades or, who would incentivise getting good grades and things.

P2: Oh yeah, the incentivising is really strange. Because like, when I got my GCSE results, it was like, good, you did good for you, and like there were some kids in my year, who were like, oh yeah, my nan’s given like twenty quid for every A or something, I was like what, you’re being paid for this!

P1: Yeah.

P2: I mean I wasn’t a good student. I’m not gonna lie to you, I was a very bad student at Secondary School. Like my attendance in Year 10, I think was about forty percent, so, when I said I was applying for Medicine, my school were surprised, to say the least. Because I was one of the kids who was smart, I was in the top set, and then I got moved out of top set into second set, because of attitude problems; that was the official reason given. So, I wasn’t, I wasn’t necessarily lazy, but if I didn’t think it was worth doing, I wasn’t going to do it. Why would I make a poster, I’m not covering my book, I was a bit of like a rude child, to say the least. I wasn’t bad, I was really, I just didn’t really like the teachers, I just like spent quite a lot of time in detention for lateness, to be honest. So, I don’t know, like coming here I’ve done like the most, I’m probably behind, but like, I didn’t do that much work, in like sixth form, I didn’t have a teacher for half of Year 12 Biology, so, we just had like lessons where we’d sit there, we were supposed to be reading a text book, so we wouldn’t fall behind with no teacher, and I didn’t have a teacher for six months, and then we had a substitute teacher, and he had throat cancer or some type of cancer, so she had to have surgery, and therefore couldn’t talk, so, would just stand there and point at slides. So, no-one did any work, and there was like not much motivation. Some kids like did the whole textbook, and it was super-heavy year 13. I was probably one of the most unmotivated kids, who wasn’t self-driven, and regretted it in Year 13. But I pulled out the bag, everyone was quite amazed, so, it was fine.

F: Okay. We’ll just finish off with the last question. So, we’ve kind of, I think got a sense that different students have different qualities that they bring to the Medical School, so, what about looking into the overall professional education you get, so, do you think students from different backgrounds bring anything different; diversities to the Medical School?

P2: Definitely, everyone brings something different. And it’s like you’re not a pretend doctor, we all deserve to do it, like.

P1: Yeah.

P2: How you personally decide on your style of doctoring, going forward; some people will be like, cheery and friendly, some people will be like serious.

P1: There are lots of, and another thing I have noticed about BM6, some of them, some of the people have this turn-on, like they can turn-on like how they’re going to talk to patients, or they can like switch from this very relaxed language, to the sort of like straight-up, saying everything really specifically.

P2: Oh yeah, I know like.

P1: And be like, yeah.

P2: I change my voice when I talk to patients.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Because I’m quite chilled out. Oh, you change your mannerisms and how you talk and everything; at the same time, someone said to me once, they were like, you shouldn’t change your accent, like obviously I should annunciate more, I do sometimes mumble, but, because it enforces the idea that only certain types of people can do Medicine, and become doctors. I don’t know, I think having a diverse range of doctors makes patients feel more at ease, because it like, it might reflect their own community and stuff. And also like, we need doctors, it doesn’t matter where you come from, just please come and be doctors; the NHS is like dying. I think having a diverse year group, it’s also like on those like cultural days and that if everyone’s bringing their different food, it’s really great – there’s so much food! I don’t know. I think, also year groups are just better if people are aware of the privileges that they have, and like it doesn’t mean your life hasn’t been hard, but I think if you like acknowledge that you have had like a head-start, it just makes everyone feel better.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Not like, not to like feel ashamed of your background, you should be proud of where you come from, regardless.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But it’s when were like, oh like why didn’t you get, like do this or do this, and it’s like well maybe you had extra help, and maybe you didn’t, but.

P1: Yeah, it’s like in general at Uni, like you get lots of people who are, like really having to sort out loans and things, and their parents don’t fund them at all, and people who have to pay for absolutely everything out of their own pocket, have a job, so, go home at the weekends, to work and support their family.

P2: Oh no, I support myself.

P1: And so, in general, like the differences, you’re so right about it, like making everyone realise that they’re like privileged. But I kind of think we’re all privileged.

P2: Everyone has privilege, yeah.

P1: We’re at Southampton, and we’ve got this great opportunity, which, like so many people don’t have, and like in general, in Britain, we’re so privileged.

P2: Yeah, oh, a hundred percent.

P1: But I think it’s.

P2: There’s still like a scale of privileges.

P1: Like if we didn’t have this, like if there weren’t other people on our course from different backgrounds, then yeah, we would slip into a bubble, like at private school, how everyone slips into how everyone expects everyone one, I don’t know, have like loads of money or be able to afford loads of things that actually, like lots of people at private schools don’t, but yeah, like the allusion is that they do.

P2: Yeah. I do have a really good friend who went to private school, and like some of them, they’re like you don’t understand, you think I’m really rich, well like I’m on the lower-ranking private school, I go to one of the cheapest ones, and my family isn’t balling, and I was like, no, no, no, you go to private school.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But other friends got full scholarships, so.

P1: Yeah, exactly, their parents give up absolutely everything. There was a guy at my school, his family, like his dad worked three jobs, but just because they knew if he gets into a private school, he’s going to be set for life, like a lot better.

P2: It’s also, not even the education, I think it’s the networking.

P1: Yeah.

P2: The whole like, especially who you know makes a big difference.

P1: Yeah, like work experience things.

F: Yeah.

P2: It’s better

P1: Like I literally, I just asked my dad, can I go and watch surgery.

F: Is your dad a doctor?

P1: No, my dad’s not a doctor, he just knows people who are doctors, like, in general, like me and my brother, we just asked our dad, can we just do things, and it’s not that he’s giving everything to us on a plate, but like his friends are really interested, that he encouraged other people to do things, so, like, but I mean I appreciate that’s like really a bit too much of a high-horse, and I don’t really like it myself, like.

P2: No, it’s like make the most of it and everything, but the fact the Medical School is now, and especially like they always said to us, it doesn’t matter what the problems, if you couldn’t get work-experience, if you have like a full-time job, well not a full-time job, if you had a job, and things like that, but it was still, I’m not going to admit, it was definitely a struggle writing our personal statements, when we say like example ones, it was like talk about the time that you saw this, and we’re like none of us have even been in a room, like a surgical, unless we’ve had our own surgical procedure, so, please talk about like your personal experience or family experience, or like, and me and my mate worked at [a DIY store] for the entirety of our college education she talked about that, and we said it doesn’t feel the same, going into an interview, like I want to be a doctor, why, well I work on the tills.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, I actually can’t remember what the question was, because I definitely went on for too long. What was the question?

F: What does having diverse students bring to the Medical School, learning or training environment?

P2: I don’t know, like an awareness of like society and inequalities and also like hopefully a better understanding of your patients that you’re treating, everyone.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And it does burst your bubble. I come from London, I live in a bubble, a hundred percent.

P1: Yeah.

P2: We all have different views, like things that I didn’t, didn’t see were that prevalent but now I’ve come here now I’ve met people from different backgrounds, and you learn things from people from different backgrounds.

P1: A lot, yeah.

P2: Yeah, a hundred percent. It’s good, just generally, yeah.

P1: Also like in terms of working, so, like the attitudes of other people to work or to get things done, and it’s like, been quite different for me.

P1: Yeah, or like why people do it. I, like lots of people I know, when I’ve spoken to, have like different motives for Medicine, and like they’re so, the huge difference in that makes it more interesting, that like also gives you another reason to do Medicine.

P2: Yeah, it’s like just people saying I’m doing it for this, you’re like oh that’s lovely, super-cool, and like I can do it as well.

P1: Yeah. Well some people are just like, like they just genuinely want to be a better person, as in how doctors are, like, and ranging from that, to like, yeah, there’s family, like there’s a member of their family who have been ill, for like their whole life, and so, this kind of range, it’s like really interesting, and it really inspires us, like us all to work a bit harder sometimes.

P2: Sometimes, yeah. I don’t know. I think one thing that’s interesting, looking back, in fifth year, is like the fact, we all come, like once you get to Medical School, it kind of levels the playing field, but not entirely, still, because you were saying, like I have a job, it doesn’t, so, I work back home, so, I go home to East London every Friday, it means I don’t get to, I don’t go out Friday night, ever, because I’m travelling, then I don’t, I lose my entire Saturday to working, which isn’t like for me a big deal, but like, having two-day weekend to study, is better than having like a one-day weekend to study.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, like.

P1: Those of us staying here, it doesn’t mean we get work done.

P2: Yeah, I know, but you will study.

P1: But you don’t really work harder on your days when you’re here.

P2: That’s right, because I have only the Sunday, when actually I would have to study on a Sunday! But like this weekend and last weekend, I’m working the whole weekend, so, I have had no time to study.

P1: Yeah, whereas I might go out, Friday, maybe Saturday as well, and then just my whole weekend is done, and it’s not really useful. But I think it’s like totally different, so, some people who work, actually work less than me who doesn’t, I go out for fun in the time that they’re replacing it with work, so, they still work as hard, or probably a lot harder than me, just because they think, well I’ve got to work on other days, and so, in itself it creates this like, this improvement attitude, this attitude for just keeping going with everything, whereas I think maybe I’m quite an example of maybe just sitting there and not really doing anything, just because I know that.

P2: You obviously work, you made it here.

P1: Yeah, but.

F: I guarantee you will do some work.

P1: Yeah, I do now and then.

F: That is great. Thanks guys. Can either of you think of anything we haven’t said about diversity? Ok, I’m going to pause the recorder.