**BMEU, Year 1 (Focus Group 7)**

F: Facilitator

P1M: Participant 1 (Male)

P2F: Participant 2 (Female)

P3F: Participant 3 (Female)

P4F: Participant 4 (Female)

F: So, would you mind introducing yourselves, do you mind starting, here?

P1M: Yeah, my names P1M

P2F: My name is P2F

P3F: my name is P3F

P4F: My name is P4F

F: Great. So, my first question is really about Widening Participation in general. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of Widening Participation to university, if they have it in Germany. Does it sound familiar, what do you understand by it?

P4F: I mean the BM6 programme for example is one thing they are doing or widening the participation. So just means that you don’t only get like, 100 years ago it was all white males from privileged backgrounds. So now you get all sexes, all ethnicities, different backgrounds and types of, from deprived areas and just to give everyone a chance

P3F: and I’m quite sure that there’s a general admission to the BM5 course here you have to have specific grades, but for the Widening Access BM6 course you don’t have to have those best grades and you can have a bit, worse(?) grades and you don’t have to have perfect A-Level score. I know this exists and I think a few other courses as well, I’m not sure if there’s something for all of them. But one of my flatmates is doing a pre-year, a year zero kind of thing

F: Yeah, cool. Is it something you two have heard of before?

P1M: no, no

F: Thanks. So, it sounds like you have a bit of an understanding of widening access is – as you said, giving everyone a chance to get in. So, things like the extra programmes with foundation year, or it might be going out into schools and encouraging students from different backgrounds to apply to make sure as you said we have different backgrounds, sexes, ethnicities, different socio- economic backgrounds, or supporting those students when they’re here. Do you think widening participation is important? If so why, or why not?

P4F: yes, I think it’s important because sometimes medical school can often focus more on people’s grades rather than the personalities, so it’s really important to give everyone a chance who like has a good personal attitude to become a doctor, and that’s really important not only to look at the grades. Because obviously grades depend on teachers well, and the school you can go to. If you can go to a really really good school for example in Oxford or Scotland then you can have better grades of course, they have more money, so you have more better education. But it doesn’t mean you’ll be a better doctor!

P1M: I think it’s also important because treatment of patients doesn’t just reflect one particular group of society, it should reflect all groups of society. So therefore, if you have different people from different social backgrounds, they’re more able to understand patients in the same way, in a different way from someone who’s from a different background

P2F: And I think that it’s important to show that you want to give everyone the chance to become anything they want to so that everyone can dream as widely as they want. And then they can see how they can achieve it and not feel like “oh it’s just a dream, I can’t do it anyway so why bother?”. And to give people a chance who don’t only come from medical families, other people need a chance. We should appreciate that people who don’t come from medical families have a lot to offer too.

P4F: But... I agree with P1M very much, but I think of course not everyone can go to med school, it’s a course that, you know, I couldn’t be a model, and I don’t see that as a bad thing. There are reasons why, like how I was born and my lifestyle that make me not able to be a model, and I think that’s okay, I don’t think its mean, that’s just not something I can be even if I would want to. And same with medicine – I think obviously widening access is important but still there will always be a lot of people who would like to be a doctor, but they can’t, it’s just not for them. Even with widening access, it’s just not possible for them to get the grades or pass the UKCAT or BMED – you know, that might be because of the support they get or something they maybe haven’t been given

P3F: And I think sometimes at the moment the child has to decide if they want to study medicine or not at such an early age, so you have to be very good at school from 15 or 16 on to have a very good A-Level

P2F: Yes, and you have to make that decision even before A-Level because you have to do like Biology and Chemistry.

P3F: yes, and you might not even know that, that you need Chemistry. So, it’s very early to really be sure about, I agree with you, that not everyone can be a doctor of course. But I think it’s also possible that you know, you might be a crazy child and you don’t care about school at all, and then, get to 17 and think okay I want to do it, but your grades are not good enough. Doesn’t mean you wouldn’t be good enough now.

P2F: Is there a possibility to pay less for university if you don’t have the money, with fees?

F: It depends on the university, there are different WP initiatives and one of them is a reduced financial offer usually in the form of bursaries – money that you don’t have to pay back – whereas most students only get the loan system, where they do have to pay back eventually.

P2F: yeah, I thought so, I think it’s important to have bursaries, it’s important to show people that if you qualify by being very engaged with the student body or having very good grades that you can use a bursary to have to pay less.

P3F: I think the bursaries are unrelated to the grades?

P2F: Are they always?

P3F: The ones at Southampton usually are

P2F: oh, I think this is very good

F: Yes, you can get scholarships as well which you don’t pay back which are usually more grade dependent. Great, so we’ve mentioned the BM6 and obviously you are on BMEU – what do you know about the full range of different programmes at Southampton for getting a medical degree?

P3F: I know there’s BM4, BM5, BMEU, BM6 and BMIT

P4F: what’s BMIT I’ve never heard of that?

P3F: I think that’s the international one

P2F: oh yeah, they come after second year. So, they come when we leave

P4F: From Malaysia?

F: And do you know how students get onto the programme or how they are different? Why do we have different programmes?

P4F: BM4 is for graduates, and also there are a lot of graduates in the BM5 programme but it’s very difficult to get onto the BM4. So BM4 would apply for BM5 as well. And then BM6 is obviously the Widening Access where you start a year earlier, they do a foundation year 0

P2F: and the BM4 programme, join the others in year 3 I believe but instead of doing year 1 and 2, they do 1 and 2 together so it’s shorter. So, they join the others in year 3 but yeah, they’ve already done a degree in like bio-chemistry or something.

P3F: yeah and they have very tight schedules. I think they have uni every day from either 8 til 5 or 9 til 5.

P2F: and BM international, they are coming for placements basically

P4F: yeah, they’re like the same as us just the other way around!

P2F: and obviously for BMEU we have to apply in Germany and they choose us, and just refer us to Southampton.

P3F: I think it’s so funny that most of us didn’t really know what we applied for until we got here!

P4F: oh really?

P3F: Yeah, a lot of us didn’t know until we went to the selection days and we were like “oh it’s not a private university!”, like we knew it was in the UK but didn’t know the rest, like it was private

P4F: really?

P3F: yes

P2F: the rest of the people I know yeah weren’t sure

P4F: Oh, I went to the open day in September, I even went to Southampton to have a look.

P3F: oh, I didn’t know anything, I just applied. I was quite surprised that I got in!

F: So yeah, there’s obviously these different programmes and lots of students on them, do you kind of have any understandings or perceptions about what students on different programmes are like?

P2F: the BM6 for example, they already have a lot of knowledge for example in anatomy, and sometimes it’s quite helpful to have them in the anatomy groups with BM5s and BMEU because they can help you sometimes when you’re just like okay what is this on the specimens? And that’s quite helpful, but in general I think it’s mostly BM5 that are just with us. The BM6 are already like part of the uni. I don’t really know.

P4F: I live with 5 people from the BM5, and I’m retaking so I spent last year in halls and this year. And last year I’ve been, I didn’t really do this on purpose, except for like 2 people from BMEU all of my friends were from BM5 and BM6, and all the sports I do were with people from BM5 and BM6 and like other courses too. Only this year I’m much more with the BMEU and last year, many people were surprised... everyone knew that I was German, but then I had people come up at the end of the year like “oh you’re BMEU! I thought you were BM5 and just German because you’re always with the English ones!”. And I don’t know, neither this year or last year I kind of did it on purpose, it just kind of happened

F: Okay, so it sounds like, would you say the BMEU students normally stick together?

P4F: I think so

P2F: unfortunately, yes

P4F: unfortunately, yes, but also last year we didn’t really have a good community feeling within BMEU, we were like a larger group and then a few smaller groups. For example, I had my two BMEU friends and we never did anything with any of the others. And this year it’s very different – we did a field trip to the Isle of White with everyone together, and did many activities for example on Wednesday we do a picnic all together and last week it was soccer, and Saturday we went out together

P3F: it’s great though because we can support each other, and we can be like “okay let’s go to the library together”, but also have fun together. So, we have a really close community. We try not to exclude ourselves and we really try to speak English when someone else is with us, but obviously when it’s just Germans we obviously speak German, because there’s just no point speaking English for us.

P2F: I feel like there’s definitely room for improvement

P3F: Yeah, of course there is!

P2F: I heard from a few BM4 student that I know from other friends that they are quite busy and stuck to themselves and there’s like a rumour going around that they think way more of themselves than everyone in BM5 and BM6. I can’t verify it, I don’t know, but I’ve also heard that the current BM zero year feel very excluded from us because some BM5 year 1s told them “oh you’re BM6, yeah well I can’t talk to you then”

P4F: I’ve not heard anything like that or had that kind of experience

P2F: no, me neither, it’s just one of those things that you hear. Like it might just be one or two individual people, it’s just what I’ve been told

P3F: Yeah, I’ve never experienced anything like that. For me it’s just, we’re all medical students it’s just, that the BM6 are so good. I have one BM6 in the MIP group and he is SO good, he was in year zero last year and now he’s MUCH better than I am, so I think it would be just mean to say

P2F: Yeah, of course it’s mean

P3F: Yeah, stupid and mean and there’s no sense at all

P4F: to go back, doing so much together on the one hand excludes us, but it also includes everyone in the BMEU which we didn’t have last year. So last year I think we were better included in the whole programme, but this year it’s, we have a much better kind of group feeling for us.

P3F: I have a lot of BM5 friends as well and I’m moving in with BM5, so I don’t really feel excluded. I mean they know we’re like special but obviously, I don’t think that they have a big problem because they know that we’re nice and we try to integrate sometimes. Of course, they understand that we are different to them

P2F: I spent all my holidays last year with BM5s as well

P1M: I think there are many pros and cons, I think it’s just difficult at the moment to find the right balance? I think that’s what were progressing to at the moment. At the beginning, some people were doing a lot of stuff with BM5 student, students in general. Others with just BMEU students. Whereas now we’re slowly getting to that point where we find the right balance, which is kind of sad though because with Easter just coming up and then the exam phase, it’s just gonna, takes off that balance again, and that long summer break again, after that next year will be quite busy as far as what I’ve heard. And then after that we’ll go back to Germany!

P2F: if we make it on time!

P3F: But I think the courses, from what I usually see, are quite diverse. Like with the different programmes, and you see many, if you look round in the lecture theatre, you see many different ethnicities and hear many different accents from inside the UK and outside

P2F: and Germans!

P3F: and my boyfriend goes to Oxford, so I was there so many weekends and went to some lectures and compared to that, our course looks extremely diverse! And, I don’t know, I felt in many situations it wasn’t diverse enough in Sports clubs and stuff, but with the medicine, you really have the feeling like, of course there’s always space to improve, but I never felt diversity was an issue here because so many things have already been done

F: Cool, so that was lots of ideas about socialising and being friends with students from different programmes. Do you have many opportunities to study together with students from different programmes? Can you describe what it’s like to study with students on different programmes?

P2F: I don’t know, we’re not really making stuff together in tutorials

P3F: I guess there’s MIP and stuff?

P4F: yeah and anatomy workshops

P3F: in my anatomy group I have one BM6 student who is quite helpful because he just knows a lot and he can help you and like, yeah it should be that way – we’re gonna study that later and more intensely – but just to give you which direction you have to go it’s quite helpful, yeah

P1M: I think apart from that we’re not doing too much. A bit of BM6 but we don’t have any study to do with BM4 or BMIT, or other courses. It’s pretty much solely BM5, BMEU and BM6 Y1

P4F: But I often meet with students like outside, mainly BM5 students, for revision. And some I know from my anatomy group, and the rest just from like lectures, and my MIP groups like half BM6 and half graduates, it’s like “oh” – I think there’s no one who’s from actual BM5 without having done a degree before. And with them we often, even after MIP and stuff, we meet and go through stuff. I don’t think that it’s just that we all have a language which the others don’t speak which kind of excludes us in a way. And the BM6 they’ve already all known each other for a year. So, they don’t have the feeling of like coming into a lecture theatre and not knowing anyone and having to just like start chatting – they already have their friends! So, they’re automatically a tiny bit excluded. But other than that, I think, it’s quite easy to make friends

P3F: But I think it’s also kind of important for the BMEUs to be a close group and make friends because in one and a half years we’ll be in Germany and we have to, yes, we have to get quite close otherwise it could be a lonely 3 years’ time in Germany!

P2F: I would disagree, it’s not like we have to make friends now and if you don’t then you won’t find friends in Kassel! I think there are some of us who do most things with BM5s or BM6 students and not so much with the BMEUs and they still sometimes do stuff with us and I think they’ll be fine, I think everyone has to decide for themselves with whom they want to be friends and with whom they want to do more or less

P4F: Yes, but for example for the group, when we’re working with the group, I think it’s really good because I think everybody has their role in the group. I mean BM6 obviously know a lot, but

P2F: yeah, BMEUs know different stuff, like from Germany. So, it’s quite helpful to get input from everywhere when you have to do group work, especially when it’s about being creative for example in SSU, so that you don’t have one perspective all the time.

F: Cool. That leads really nicely into my last question actually, which is: what do you think having students on the different programmes and from different backgrounds, what do you think that brings to the medical school learning environment? Or in the future into the clinical education?

P3F: I think it’s very important to realise quite early on as a medical doctor that you have to deal with very different personalities, people, and that you should definitely not discriminate against anyone for whichever reason, and to get used to trying to understand someone who’s from a different area with maybe different accent maybe, even language barriers, and to try to become accepting of, yeah, every kind of feature a person can have

P4F: yeah, I learned a lot about different cultures since I came here, and definitely not just the English culture. Like just by little things, for example, with the BMEU we had a Christmas dinner and I knew that at least one girl she didn’t, she ended up not coming, but at least I tried to cook her halal and stuff! It’s something that you... or I was staying with some friends from BM5 who are Jewish, at their house, and I had to cook kosher for a week. And things that, you know, not just religious, cooking, but have nothing to do with medicine but their lives and it might impact their health. But I’ve learned so much from those experiences about different cultures. And living with people who you probably wouldn’t have met if you’d stayed in castle the whole time and I mean I come from Berlin so it’s very multicultural anyway, but mainly, Turkish-Arabic, and here there’s also so many Philippines, Chinese, Africa, Indian, yeah, so much diverser

P3F: and I feel like we actually get to know differences from different parts of Germany as well because we start talking about different topics and it’s always like “In [city] it’s like this” and everyone’s like “what, are you sure?” so...

P2F: yeah, it’s all so interesting to know the situations in different countries. For example, the Americans just use other words to describe for example Staving’s law because you know when you go there and want to work there you just know more, because we’ve learned that from each other. For example, also about their education and their views on how to treat somebody is quite different, and you can then get their input, you can get all of it, and pick the best of it, so you can be the best doctor you can be

P4F: I mean patients are gonna be multicultural as well, so it will be easier to accommodate their cultural needs if you have experience of it before as you have less of a cultural shock. I mean there’s always just because we’re with many people it doesn’t mean we speak their language, but it’s not gonna be difficult if someone walks into ER that doesn’t speak English or German, but yeah it makes some understanding easier

P1M: and I think as well as the patients it helps us work as a team with other doctors. It’s really important, especially for the future, with many different nationalities working in one team. By getting to know different cultures right from the beginning of med school you can learn how to understand the different point of views from different cultures, which is really important in finding a solution later on, that works for everyone, when working with different doctors from different cultures. Because they might have those different viewpoints or see things differently and maybe emphasis different things than you do, so it’s really important, to appreciate different perspectives, as well

P4F: I’ve worked with many people from everywhere but probably less Eastern Europeans? I don’t know exactly why that is, but there are so many people from over the world here, specifically like Asia, America and also many people from Africa, and I haven’t met like a single Polish people, like I’ve met one friend from Lithuania, and maybe a few from Hungary but that’s about it. One girl I know from Estonia, but in comparison to, not just in the medical, but in the whole university, it’s something that I don’t, a language that I don’t hear very much in comparison to the others

P3F: There are a couple from the Czech Republic and Poland on our course?

P4F: Yeah but it’s not like a group of people, it’s like one person, in comparison to how many people you meet who are from India!

F: Is there anything else we haven’t mentioned about Widening Participation or Diversity? Ok I will stop the recording.