**An investigation into the progression of OU STEM students from taught courses to postgraduate research**

Alice:

Hello, I'm Alice Fraser-McDonald, and I'm working on an eSTEeM project with Sally Jordan and David Sharp. The project started in February and

it focuses on investigating the progression of OU students on taught courses in STEM, to postgraduate research with the University.

We're aiming to improve our understanding of current progression rates and the reasons for students deciding to either pursue, or not pursue, post-graduate research with the OU after completing their taught qualification.

Firstly. we're going to analyse student data to determine how many current STEM PhD students have previously completed taught courses with the University. Then we're going to conduct surveys and follow-up interviews with students who've

completed undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses with the OU. This will help us to find out about their next steps after taught study and their decisions relating to postgraduate research.

We'll also be reviewing current STEM modules and qualifications to determine the levels of support in developing skills for postgraduate research, and how students are made aware of this option. This involves interviewing colleagues, such as qualification leads, and end of qualification module chairs. This project will give us a better understanding of the current pathway for STEM students from taught study to post-graduate research and the reasons for their decisions relating to this.

We plan to then feedback to colleagues, including module chair, qualification leads and postgraduate research tutors. There are also some potential follow-on projects and we will decide if these are appropriate based on the findings of this investigation, so for example we could recommend and trial some changes to modules to try and better support students who do want to pursue post-graduate research, and we may also want to compare the findings about student progression at the OU with the wider higher education sector.