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When the extent of the BAME attainment gap in universities was brought to my attention, I was shocked, because universities should be places where opportunity and aspiration come together. Of course I knew that, given its extent in society, discrimination would exist in our universities. What I was not prepared for was the patchy approach to action to bring about change. Some universities have been slow in recognising the scale of the challenge and in committing to making the changes required. Others have made significant progress in narrowing the gap.

We face significant challenges in terms of representation, pedagogy, curriculum reform and student experience. BAME students do not do as well at university compared with their White counterparts – the latest statistics show a 13% attainment gap. BAME staff are poorly represented in both senior academic and university leadership roles: of 19,000 people employed as professors in the UK, only 400 are BAME women. In a typical gathering of 100 professors, 90 would be white and there would be just two BAME women.

Why is this happening? In Britain, we are proud to have some of the best universities in the world attracting global talent, yet the data in this report shows that even when BAME students overcome the hurdles that prevent them getting to university in the first place, they do not have an equal chance at succeeding. We are not operating a level playing field.

This is why I was pleased to be asked to lead on this project for Universities UK (UUK), working with Amatey Doku, Vice-President for Higher Education from the National Union of Students. We started a nationwide conversation about the BAME attainment gap and how to address it. The report shows how structural inequality within universities has a profound effect on students' ability to achieve. My thanks go to the students who participated in our evidence sessions and helped us to understand the pervasive and negative impact of discrimination on the student experience and their ability to achieve, and also to the university leaders, academics and university administrators who shared their experiences and perspectives.

unions are aware that there is an issue and have prioritised it in their campaign work; the Office for Students (OfS) in England has set new targets for institutions to close their gaps and the issue has even been given a profile by the Cabinet Office and the government's Race Disparity Audit. If you include the establishment of the new Evidence and Impact Exchange at the OfS, a 'what works' practice-sharing hub for the sector on related issues, and the tireless effort of activists and campaigners on the ground, we have a window of opportunity not just to continue to profile the issue but to make real change. Our report and our recommendations must be viewed in that wider context, as not providing all the answers, but spurring that collective effort to turn the intent of many to change into real, meaningful action.

This report would not have happened without the work of student activists and campaigners who made sure that this was on the agenda for NUS and allowed me to make it a clear priority for the Higher Education Zone for the first time in years. I'd like to thank all the students and students' unions that engaged with our surveys and shared their invaluable experiences at our roundtables.

Finally, I ask university leaders, from whom strong leadership on these issues is essential, not to treat the BAME attainment gap as a numbers game. Data analytics and targets will be critical to ensuring that there is accountability and transparency, but we must never lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with the lives of individuals who face systematic discrimination from all parts of society.

We must not be complacent, but I'm optimistic that if we take action, higher education can begin to play its part in the long-term project to dismantle racial inequality across British society.

Amatey Doku

Linked to the above steps to success, UUK and NUS recommend that:

the Office for Students, (OfS) Evidence and Impact Exchange systematically reviews 'what works' (as well as what does not) as a priority, to inform universities' investment and strategies to address the attainment gap

the government's Race Disparity Audit considers how it can support different parts of UK civil society – including universities – that are addressing similar, structural inequalities, and draw together evidence on how different types of organisations have achieved success

Universities are at different stages of addressing their own BAME attainment gap, with some quite far advanced, and others yet to place a substantial focus on the matter. Given this mixed picture, we would also like to see:

an increase in the percentage of universities recognising attainment differences and setting specific targets to reduce them

greater awareness among university staff of how to support BAME students

greater insight into BAME students' perceptions, including where these are linked to students' sense of belonging

appropriate disaggregation within the broad BAME category, ensuring practices and initiatives reflect that this 'group' consists of individuals with varied experiences and needs

There is no 'quick fix' to address and eliminate attainment differentials – and every university's context is different – but what the issues set out in this report mean in practice needs to translate into universities' wider strategies and plans to support continued or improving BAME student access and success.

In particular, this has to be the start of a journey on which higher



Year after year, evidence has shown that white students are, on average, more likely to leave university with a first- or upper-second-class degree compared to black students, asian students, and students from mixed ethnicity backgrounds. This difference in educational outcomes is often referred to as the BAME attainment gap.

This report first explains what the attainment gap looks like in UK universities, followed by a summary of feedback from students and staff to two online calls for evidence. Information gathered through these surveys helped identify five steps to success. These are:

- strong leadership
- conversations about race and culture
- racially diverse, inclusive environments
- evidence and analysis
- what works

Subsequent chapters focus on each of these steps and the barriers that are preventing the sector from successfully closing the gap. They include recommendations for tackling the barriers to success.



When we talk about the ‘ethnicity attainment gap’ at first-degree level, we are referring to the difference between the proportion of White UK-domiciled students who are awarded a first or upper second degree and the proportion of UK-domiciled Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students who are awarded degrees of the same class. This is also referred to as the BAME attainment gap.

We acknowledge the challenges in using homogenising language, such as BAME, and where possible, ethnicities have been disaggregated into smaller groups. We recommend that universities disaggregate student ethnicity data, where student populations allow for this. We also recommend universities consult appendix E in Stevenson et al (2019) for further discussion and detail about appropriate terminology.



The BAME attainment gap does not exist in isolation within higher education, but is part of the wider structural nature of racial inequality in

David Lammy MP (2017) and Baroness McGregor-Smith (2017) also published damning reviews regarding racial inequalities in the criminal justice system and race in the workplace respectively. The voluntary Race at Work Charter responded to McGregor-Smith's findings that 'there is discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career, and even before it begins' for people from BAME backgrounds (McGregor-Smith, 2017:3). This bias was largely found to be structural, resulting from an unfair system that works only for a select few. The government committed to implementing compulsory ethnicity pay reporting for large employers, mirroring the requirement for gender pay gap reporting established in 2017.

The Resolution Foundation published research into the ethnicity pay gap in July 2018, finding that Black male graduates experience a 17% difference in pay compared with White male graduates, even after controlling for factors such as type of work, personal characteristics and background (Henehan and Rose, 2018). The responses to the BBC's Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to universities revealed that there is an average pay

Of all the disparities that exist within higher education, the BAME attainment gap is among the most stark. It is important for attainment to be understood within the context and interactions of the other racial inequalities in higher education, as well as wider society. For example, university drop-out rates vary significantly by ethnicity, with Black students almost one and a half times more likely to drop out than White or Asian students (Keohane and Petrie, 2017). However, when we discuss attainment,

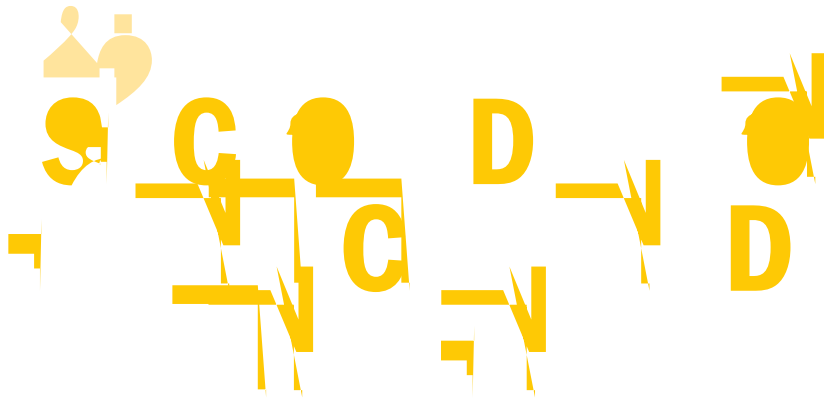


“It’s important to know that BAME attainment is not solely a BAME issue. It’s a university-wide problem, and it shouldn’t just be left to the BAME community to fix.”

Adesewa, University of Huddersfield

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On 1 February 2019, a package of measures aiming to tackle ethnic disparities at universities was announced by the UK government through



The most recent student data²

FIGURE 1: The attainment gap between White and BAME students overall persists even if the data is cut in different ways. For example, among 2017-18 graduates:

Source: HESA Student record, 2017-18

The attainment gap between White and BAME students overall persists even if the data is cut in different ways. For example, among 2017-18 graduates:

Subject group:

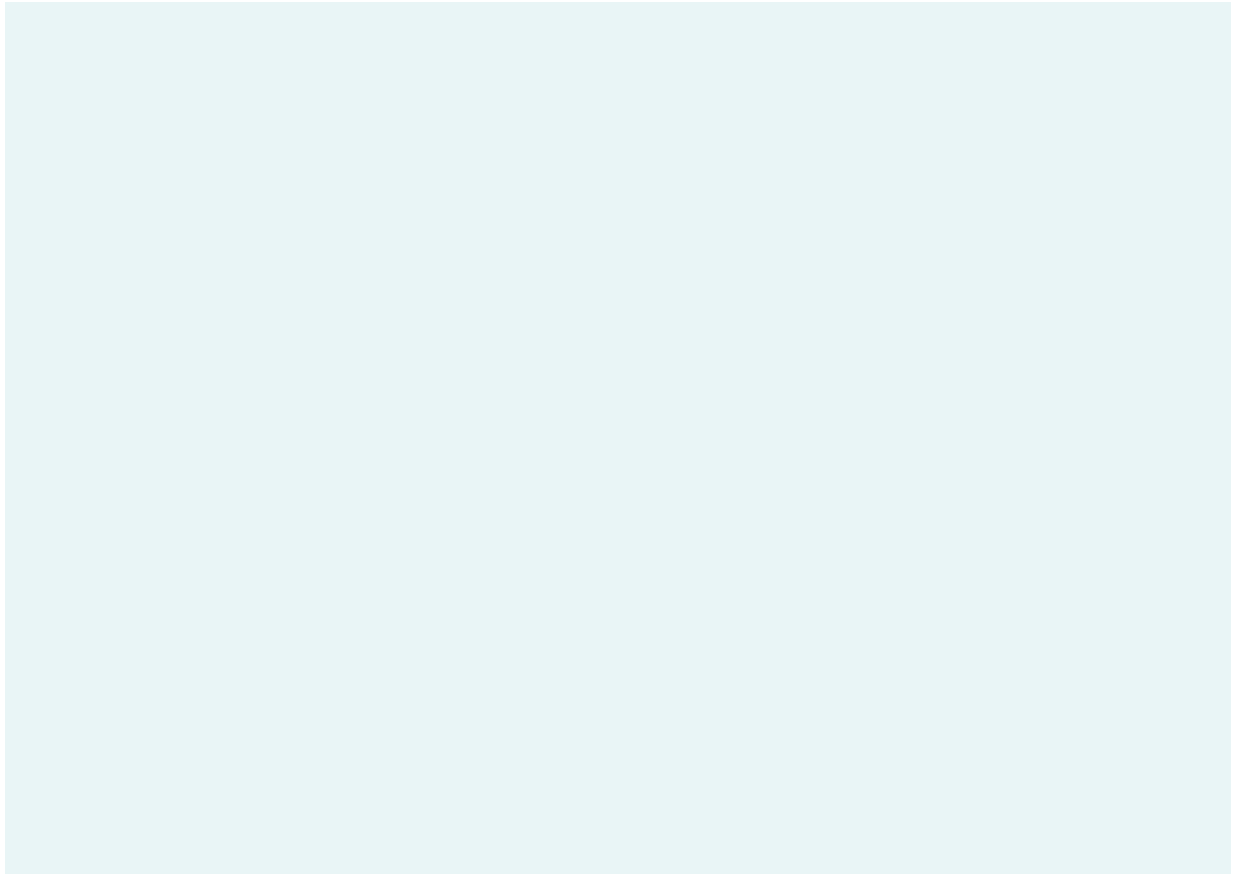
Domicile country (UK):

Overall, evidence from the OfS focused on English universities shows that, once other factors such as prior attainment, gender and age are accounted for, there remains an unexplained difference between White and Black students of 17%, and of 10% between White and Asian students (OfS).



3: Contexts of Ethnicity

This section gives a broad overview of some of the key themes identified in the literature as having an effect on ethnicity attainment differentials at degree level.





The culture of an institution is identified as an important factor in relation to the attainment of students from BAME backgrounds, and has a strong association with students' sense of belonging. Crucially, this includes an awareness of the issues affecting students from different ethnic backgrounds. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) report, *BAME student degree retention and attainment* (HEA, 2012) highlights a number of themes related to the lack of awareness among university staff of the issues that affect BAME students during their time at university. These themes included: confusion over definitions of BAME; limited awareness of the existence of a BAME attainment gap at their own institution; relying on the deficit model to frame the problem; and an over-reliance on statistics, which can sometimes mask cultural and structural problems.

Discussions on race and ethnicity can be difficult conversations to have. This can be a factor in the lack of internal understanding of ethnicity attainment gaps within institutions. There may also be resistance from some to accept that there is a problem, and a need to change established ways of working, if they are not appropriately inclusive.



Having low numbers of BAME staff has been identified as limiting an institution's capability to address the attainment gap. It can mean that BAME staff become overburdened with the responsibility of acting as role models and mentors, and this can also create a perception that the responsibility for addressing the attainment gap and related issues does not fall to other members of staff. BAME staff should be consulted on attainment gap interventions, however, universities should be mindful of avoiding an approach that is, or appears to be, tokenistic.



The design of the curriculum, its content, and the teaching and learning practices used to deliver it can have a significant impact on the way that students from different backgrounds and ethnicities respond to their course and lecturers and tutors.

In its research with students, NUS (2011) found that 42% of BAME students said that they did not feel that the curriculum reflects issues of diversity, equality and discrimination. They reported a lack of BAME-specific content and a 'mainstream' way of thinking. It is also important to consider *how* the curriculum is taught, as well as *what* is taught. A substantial amount of work into creating an inclusive curriculum has been undertaken, as well as exploration of the 'hidden curriculum'. The latter is the unintended learning of different attitudes, values and perspectives through the university environment, which typically reinforces social norms (Advance HE). There is an argument that the hidden curriculum should be brought into the open to allow it to be critiqued, and that ethnicity should be discussed as part of this.



A strong theme in the literature is the importance of inclusion and belonging. NUS (2011) found that when BAME students were asked why they were 'less likely' to be satisfied with their experience and less likely to get a first or upper second, respondents repeatedly cited feelings of discomfort, isolation and a sense of not belonging. HEFCE and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation ran a programme on student retention and success (Thomas, 2012) which found that a sense of belonging is crucial to retention and success. This looked at seven programmes being delivered collaboratively across 22 institutions. The evaluation identified belonging as an important factor and concluded that 'academic programmes and high-quality student-centred learning and teaching must be a primary focus for effective student retention and success' (Thomas, 2012, p.6).



It is widely acknowledged that attainment gaps develop much earlier in the education system than at university, and that attainment at GCSE and A-level can differ between pupils of different ethnicities, socio-economic background and other socio-demographic factors. The ethnicity attainment gap also tends to widen as pupils progress through the key stages of the national curriculum. However, it is widely recognised that too great a focus on prior attainment can lead to deficit understandings of BAME students, placing the responsibility for inequalities in attainment on the students themselves. Ethnicity attainment gaps persist in higher education even after prior attainment is controlled for.



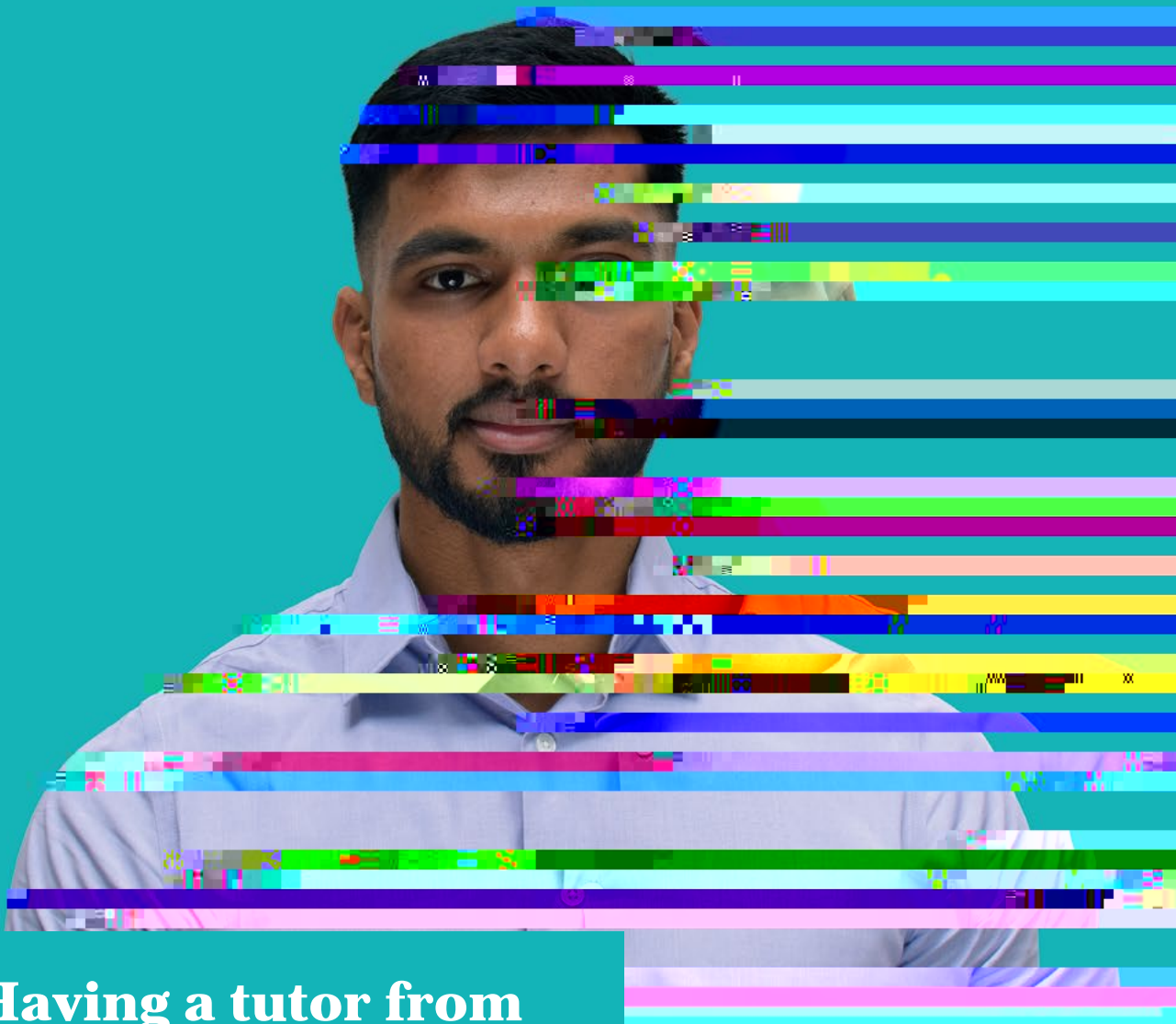
Race For Equality (NUS, 2011) highlighted that researching where to study could be more of a challenge for BAME students whose parents had no knowledge of the admissions process or hadn't been to university themselves. This can be compounded by insufficient information, advice and guidance (IAG) at schools and colleges. The same report highlighted that 25% of respondents felt that the IAG provision accessible to them was poor, or could have been better. The qualitative evidence suggested that the type of institution the respondents attended, along with their socio-economic background and the expectations of their teachers, had a significant impact on the answers BAME students gave to this question.



The financial implications of going to university are increasingly important to both current and prospective students, and the value for money presented by higher education is under intense scrutiny. A recent UUK (2018) report, *The*

both current and prospective students. A recent UUK (2018) report, *The*





“Having a tutor from the same background as me gave me a sense of comfort. I was able to talk to them not only about academic issues, but also advice for me personally.”

Sanif, Kingston University, London

Sanif, Kingston University, London

4: BUILDING COURAGE TO BRIDGE THE GAP

This section gives an overview of the factors identified by the sector as contributing to the ethnicity attainment differentials at degree level.

In June 2018, UUK sent out a call for evidence aimed primarily at practitioners and staff at institutions providing higher education, and NUS issued a separate call for evidence for student representatives. These requests for information aimed to find out how the attainment gap is being addressed and what barriers practitioners and students face in their work to remove it.

These results may disproportionately reflect the views of those most engaged with the issue of the BAME attainment gap, and, given the sample size, may

As set out in figure 5, the most significant contributing factor, according to 87% of respondents, was a lack of role models from different ethnic minority backgrounds. This was closely followed by curriculum delivery (82%), a lack of diversity in the ethnicity of senior staff (79%) and curriculum design (77%).

Only 23% said subject choice was a contributing factor and just over one-third felt that prior attainment and insufficient IAG contribute to the ethnicity attainment gap.

FIGURE 5: Which of the following, if any, do you believe are relevant contributing factors to any ethnicity attainment gaps at your institution?

Which of the following, if any, do you believe are relevant contributing factors to any ethnicity attainment gaps at your institution?

Lack of HE role models representing all ethnic groups	87%
Curriculum delivery	82%
Lack of diversity of ethnicity of senior staff	79%
Curriculum design	77%
From lower socio-economic background	64%
Institutional culture and leadership	59%
Institutional support	46%
First generation entry into HE	41%
Prior attainment	38%
Insufficient IAG	38%
Subject choice	23%
None of the above	5%

76% of respondents told us that their institution had designed interventions or activities to address or reduce any ethnicity attainment gaps, informed by the above factors.

Of the barriers that institutions experience in addressing ethnicity attainment gaps, the most prevalent were: the level of inclusive practice across the institution; understanding how to work effectively with students; and internal ownership of the issue (see figure 6).

FIGURE 6: Have you/your institution faced any of the following barriers in trying to address ethnicity attainment gaps? Please select all that apply.

Have you/your institution faced any of the following barriers in trying to address ethnicity attainment gaps? Please select all that apply.



NUS received 69 completed surveys, submitted by students and representatives from 35 institutions and their students' unions.

The open survey covered respondents who attended institutions whose students' unions are affiliated to NUS, and a small number who did not. This included a spread of institutions across the UK and reflected the variety of types of institutions, from small and specialist to large institutions, and including post-1992 and Russell Group institutions.

Again, the responses to this call for evidence might not be representative and are presented here as indicative.



Only 7% of respondents stated that their institution discusses the attainment gap with students. Respondents were largely aware of the attainment gap due to their position as a students' union sabbatical officer, not due to their status as a student per se.⁴

69% of respondents hadn't raised the issue of attainment gaps with their institution and of those who did (31%), fewer than half (14%) felt that it had resulted in action.

Excluding those who mentioned initiatives relating to widening participation, or union-led initiatives (such as BAME representatives), less than a quarter (21%) of those surveyed could describe university-led initiatives to address the attainment gap.

Figure 7 shows that, as for the UUK survey results, a lack of role models and ethnic diversity in senior leadership is believed to be a significant contributory factor for student representatives.

Lower socio-economic background (75%) and university culture and leadership (72%) were more commonly perceived as contributory factors to the BAME attainment gap among student representatives.

4. However, note that over half of respondents to UUK survey reported being confused about targeting students. This could influence the openness of universities to discussing BAME attainment gaps with students, and consequently a low level of knowledge among students generally.

FIGURE 7:



**“I want to see our leaders
have open discussions with
their students and staff. They
need to be sensitive, but also
make an effort to learn, as
well as educate.”**

Amna, Aston University

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A university's approach to addressing the BAME attainment gap will not succeed unless it is underpinned by strong leadership, with university leaders at the highest level and senior managers leading by example and taking responsibility for change.

As research (Singh, 2011) and our engagement suggest, robust support from senior university leaders is vital to underpinning the work required to remove the attainment gap. Ownership of, and accountability for, the attainment gap needs to sit with vice-chancellors and/or their senior teams. The role of senior leaders in removing ethnicity attainment gaps is to ensure the provision of appropriate resources, drive institutional change and lead by example to embed an institutional commitment to removing racial inequities. This commitment should be strategically implemented and formally adopted in relevant policies and plans (Berry and Loke, 2011).

Such policies and plans could include targets and key performance indicators (KPIs), driven at the highest level, for closing the attainment gap, and reports on progress, without signalling that this work is complete: the commitment to race equality is an ongoing one that should be permanently embedded in the work of the institution.

How are senior leaders leading on attainment gap projects?

Some vice-chancellors and senior leaders are actively engaged or leading their institution's work to remove the BAME attainment gap. A small number of institutions have created KPIs for this area, but it is clear that more can be done to commit to change. Forty-eight UK universities are members of Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC), of which 10 have received the bronze award. The REC is due to be independently reviewed in 2019.

Below are some examples of how senior leaders are involved in leading on attainment gap projects.

King's College London

King's College London is making a concerted effort to accelerate its work in diversity and inclusion, particularly in race equality. A significant element undertaken in 2018 was the start of a formal development programme for its 35 most senior leaders and decision-makers, within both academic faculty and professional services. This started with training sessions to create an understanding of structural inequality with a specific focus on race and disability. The programme continues with coaching and masterclasses to assist senior managers in identifying how to address race inequality at both the institutional level and in their specific areas of work.

King's College London has created KPIs to hold senior leaders and the institution to account for the BAME attainment gap.

University of the Arts London

The UAL Court of Governors has set a target to eliminate its attainment differential by 2020. The aim is to eliminate the differentials in a systematic and targeted way via a package of interventions that address attainment and student satisfaction. This approach aims to ensure that differential work is regarded as core to the institution, not an add-on.

5. At the time of publication, institutions are given three years from joining the REC to apply for an award, after which their membership is withdrawn.



In May 2018, Professor Janice Kay, Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Exeter, launched the Provost Commission to recommend and implement new approaches, events, initiatives and policies to ensure all of its campuses are welcoming, open and diverse places for students, staff and visitors.

The Provost Commission comprises academic and professional services staff, students and members of both students' unions, the Exeter Students' Guild and the Falmouth and Exeter Union (FXU) based in Penryn, as well as the Athletics Union. The commission is exploring new ways to promote equality, diversity and inclusivity through five themes of activity (student awareness, training and support, staff awareness, inclusive teaching and learning, an inclusive culture; and environment and data mapping).



Equality of respect and opportunity is one of the core principles set out in the LSE's ethics code, and the new LSE 2030 strategy further emphasises the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as a guiding principle for decision-making, and commits to increasing support for EDI as a strategic priority.

LSE's EDI Office serves as a vital resource in furthering its commitment to EDI, and providing services for students, staff and senior management to support diversity, inclusiveness, equal access, equitable treatment and multicultural understanding and competency. There is a newly appointed head of EDI, reporting to the chief operating officer. The work of the EDI Office is overseen by the EDI advisory board, chaired by the LSE director.



Kingston University London adopted the reduction of the BAME attainment gap as an institutional KPI following a recommendation by the vice-chancellor and with the endorsement of the university's board of governors on 4 March 2015.

The KPI was to raise the BAME value-added (VA) score to 1.0 by the end of the 2018–19 academic year. The university has almost met this VA score a year ahead of target.

VA scores take account of a student's entry qualifications and subject of study when assessing their degree attainment. Data for UK-domiciled graduates is used to create a probability that a student will achieve a first- or upper-second-class degree. These probabilities are aggregated to





Our findings suggest that a greater role for leadership in addressing the BAME attainment gap will be vital in ensuring that the key barriers to success identified in this report are better acknowledged and tackled throughout an institution. There was a strong sense that vice-chancellors could benefit from the existence of a checklist of actions to consider as part of a framework for supporting university senior leaders to move forward with their own strategies in this area.

Drawing on the actions set out in this report, UUK and NUS recommend that university leaders consider table 1 as part of a framework for addressing their institution's BAME attainment gap.

“If students don’t see themselves reflected in certain roles at university, or in certain careers and companies, they automatically disregard those roles as a possible future career. To tackle that we need to have role models at university.”

Amna, Aston University

TABLE 1: **cc** - **cc** | **cc** - **cc**

KEY AREA



BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

a g t e g t a t a

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

At what level does my institution monitor the attainment gap currently?

Does this level of analysis allow us to fully comprehend the factors creating the attainment gap? If not, what else is needed?

Does my institution make sufficient use of qualitative evidence to understand students' experiences of university and how this can affect attainment?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Assess the existing mix of data and evidence used to understand the causes of the attainment gap, and identify areas less understood to enhance the robustness of the evidence.

Assess the extent to which evidence on students' lived experiences is informing any strategy to address the BAME attainment gap, and ensure this is central to informing actions.

Consider the merits of committing to a board-level engagement with the BAME attainment gap. A KPI could be set to reduce and remove the BAME attainment gap.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

KEY AREA



BARRIERS TO SUCCESS



QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

What space is there within my institution to enable students and staff to talk openly about matters relating to race without fear of being judged for saying the wrong thing?

What message expressing a commitment to race equality is currently sent out from senior members of staff across the organisation? In what ways are these perceived positively or negatively?

How is my institution's senior team engaging with the views of students and student representatives to ensure that feedback on my university's commitment to race equality is informed by those affected by racial disparity?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Senior leaders must lead by example in talking about race, opening conversations and creating appropriate spaces for students and staff.

Senior leaders should take a key role in disseminating institutional messages on issues of race, setting the tone of the conversation and centering the student voice.

Consider whether coaching, development opportunities or programmes are needed to give leaders the confidence to talk about race and take a leading role in opening conversations.

Consider how performance in this area is measured, including recognition for contributions to tackling barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion.

KEY AREA



BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

■ **a** **g**e**t** **d**e**t**e**r**m**i**n**e**d **a**

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Does my institution have a commitment to proactively improving ethnic diversity within the academic workforce? What impact is the current position having on staff recruitment and retention?

Does my institution collect information on students' views of any lack of diversity? Can this inform what we do about it?

Do an



BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

↓ **d e t a i l e d g r a d u a t e e t a r g e t i n g t a t e**

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

In targeting initiatives, does my institution treat BAME students as one homogenous group? If yes, am I confident that we fully understand the divergence in students' lived experiences within this broad group? Does my university have a sufficiently large BAME student population in order to do so?

How are targeted interventions perceived by students in scope?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Senior leaders should encourage evidence-led, targeted interventions which do not use the deficit model. It is important that all staff understand why deficit approaches to addressing attainment gaps should not be used.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

↖ **a a t t a i n m e n t g a p t a t e**

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Has my institution developed any initiatives intended to address the BAME attainment gap? If not, can this be justified?

To what extent are my institution's initiatives being evaluated, and do current processes provide sufficient resource (including evaluative capacity) to better inform senior leaders what has been effective and what to avoid doing in the future?

To what extent is my institution drawing on best practice to inform what we do about the BAME attainment gap?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate resources are dedicated to removing the attainment gap, including for any appropriate tailored interventions, research and expertise in data analysis.

Consider where further collaboration and opportunities to share resources and knowledge might be achieved between departments but also with other universities operating in a similar context.



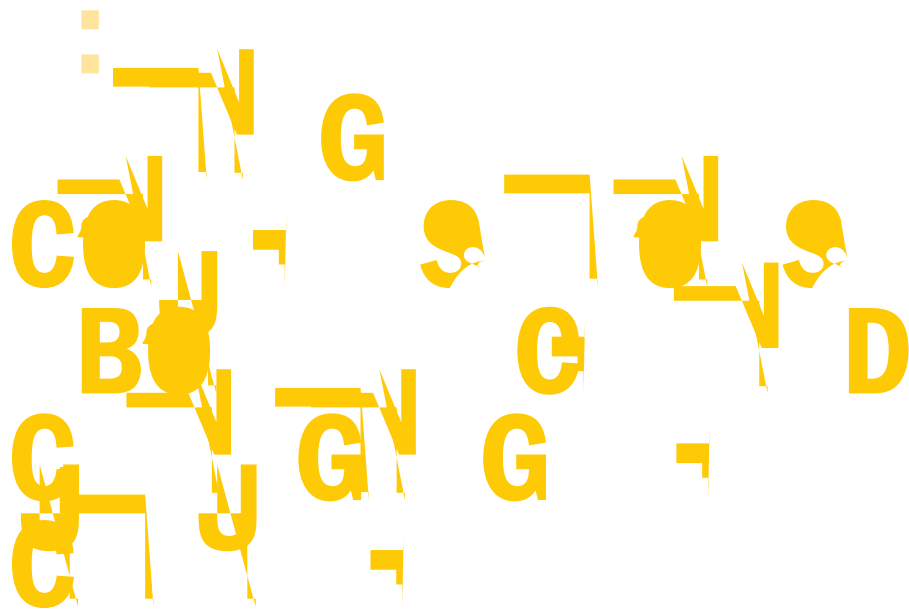
In addition to the information in table 1, our findings suggest further key actions that university leaders should consider:

featuring a commitment to closing the BAME attainment gap in university strategic plans, as opposed to just publishing separate diversity policies or statements

providing a yearly update on the attainment gap for staff and students to reinforce institutional commitment to closing the gap and being transparent about institutional inequalities

how staff might be able to provide evidence, for example in the form of annual reviews, promotion committees, etc, of how they adapt their practice in response to bias workshops or similar development activities, as part of senior leaders' efforts to embed racial equality in all areas of an institution





Research has shown that open, meaningful and constructive conversations about race, racism and ethnicity are vital (Bouattia, 2015). With strong leadership and support from executive teams, there is a need to open up conversations about the issues that lie at the heart of the BAME attainment gap within universities. Universities and students need to create more opportunities to talk directly about the BAME attainment gap, identify what BAME students think is causing it, and move towards a clear message that removing racial inequalities is embedded within institutions' strategic goals.

“I want university leaders to start having conversations about race. There should be a conscious effort to engage with BAME students so leaders can know what they are struggling with, and what kind of changes they would like to make”

Adesewa, University of Huddersfield

It is important to accept that individuals have different levels of knowledge



LEGO SC 00 0 (G9)

The GSA Race, Rights and Sovereignty series seeks to celebrate, challenge and inspire the next generation of creative professionals about race and empower them to have a creative voice.

It began in response to student and staff demand for increased opportunities to unpack ideas and safe forums for discussion. The Students' Association has been closely involved as a partner in the GSA's public lecture series to ensure that the lectures have a positive effect on the student experience. Now in its third year, having delivered 13 different events, the series has a practitioner-led programming ethos to resist tokenism and to create space for tackling issues surrounding equality and diversity in a genuine and supportive environment.

A new, dedicated website was launched in 2019, with an open-source resource centre with recommended reading lists and support networks suggested by invited practitioners, GSA staff and students, and the general public.

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The 'History Makers' touring exhibition presents portraits of Cambridge's black graduates, from 1720 to the present. The exhibition is a collaboration between the university and colleges and student society the Black Cantabs Research Society. All Cambridge undergraduates starting in 2018 viewed the exhibition as part of their induction, as well as hundreds of other visitors.

Putting a spotlight on the 'hidden histories' of early black students at the university has been a means to stimulate conversations around the representation of ethnic minorities at Cambridge, and to influence a move towards a more inclusive culture. The portraits are styled as counterpoints to the traditional Cambridge portraits lining the walls of the university and colleges in a deliberate challenge to create a new tradition of representation and inclusion for ethnic minorities.

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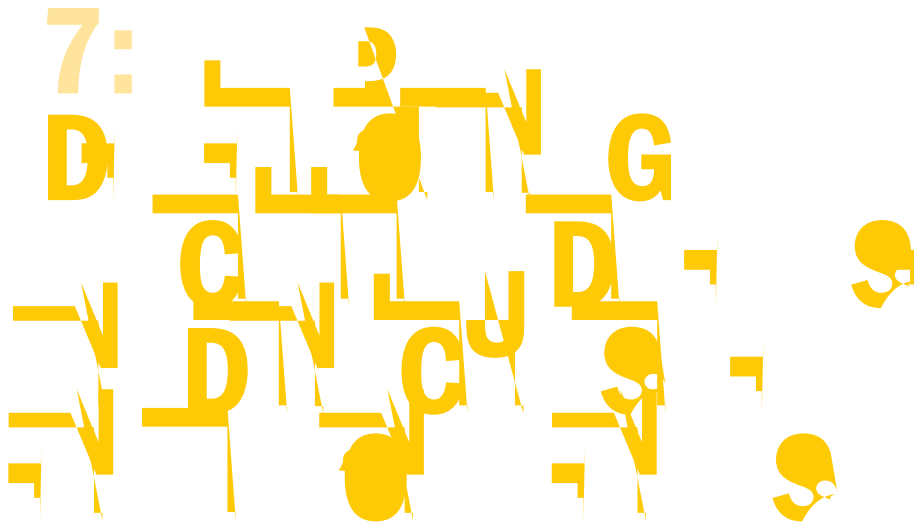
“When I arrived at university it didn’t seem like diversity was being celebrated and utilised in the way I was used to.”

Joel, University of the Arts, London





In the light of our findings, we recommend that universities:



Having conversations about race that are informed by data and evidence of individuals' experiences will possibly uncover an imbalance in diversity between a university's student and staff populations. It is clear that university leadership teams are not always representative of the student body and some curriculums do not reflect minority groups' experiences.

A greater focus is needed from across the sector, working with their students, on ensuring that BAME students have a good sense of belonging at their university, and an understanding of how a poor sense of belonging might be contributing to low levels of engagement and progression to postgraduate study.

Efforts to enhance the ethnic diversity within the academic community in UK higher education are far behind those to diversify the student population in recent years. While around 7% of UK university students are black, of all UK professors, fewer than 1% are black (HESA; Advance HE, 2018).

Evidence suggests that an imbalance in diversity can lead to individuals from ethnic minorities feeling less included within their educational environment. In the context of this report, research highlights that BAME students' sense of belonging can affect their university experience, likelihood of dropping



A university environment with few or no BAME academics, professors or senior leaders risks isolating BAME students (Arday, 2015). While it is important that BAME students have role models in their institution, which can help foster a sense of belonging, respect and aspiration, in UK universities this is not straightforward, even in universities with racially diverse student populations (OfS, 2018a). Calls for universities to prioritise diversifying both their academic and professional services staff are not new, and while some universities are encouraging BAME students to do postgraduate study with an emphasis on building a career in academia, such efforts take time to yield substantial change – BAME students represented 17% of UK-domiciled postgraduate research students in 2014–15, and this figure remained the same in 2017–18 (HESA).

Evidence suggests that, in comparison with White students, BAME students can often be more reluctant to ask for help from academics and less likely to feel supported in their studies (Stevenson, 2012). Where this is the case, it is important that the factors that can lead to a poor sense of belonging driving this are well understood. They include: a lack of BAME role models; unrelatable curriculums; academic and student biases; and microaggressions (Rollock, 2012). Several universities have already begun to examine their assessment methods and curriculums, including in relation to the BAME attainment gap. Students' levels of cultural and social capital often arise in these considerations; however, it is the institution and academics that decide what skills, experiences and backgrounds are valued and recognised (Stevenson, 2019). More consideration could therefore be given to understanding the effect that existing curriculums and content (and wider teaching and learning practices including assessment and feedback) might be having on student inclusivity, including where the social and cultural capital accrued by particular groups of students might be disproportionality valued. Kalwant Bhopal (2018) suggests that greater understanding and recognition of white privilege is needed in the UK, drawing on research from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on racial inequalities (EHRC, 2015).

Our engagement highlighted several universities undertaking curriculum review (sometimes referred to as liberation or decolonisation), activities in collaboration with their students and/or students' unions, each with important findings for the wider sector. These activities mostly exist in pilot phases and have not been rolled out across entire institutions. Many of the initiatives are not race specific, but also include equality assessments relating to gender, disability and sexuality. When considering the focus of review work, it is important that race is sufficiently considered as a standalone equality issue in order to unveil specific issues. The student voice is also of great importance. BAME students need to see a genuine desire for change behind any reviews and have a chance to share their views and experiences as part of the process (Bouattia, 2015). Similarly, whilst terms such as 'liberation' and 'decolonisation' are sometimes used, students have told us that they must be used responsibly.

Unconscious bias training is taking place or being piloted for many members of staff at universities, in different formats. For some institutions, it is voluntary training and for others it is compulsory for specific members of staff, for example academic staff but not those working in professional services. Many universities run training of this kind for those on recruitment and selection panels. However, unconscious, implicit and conscious biases can have a significant effect on the sense of belonging and attainment of BAME students (EHRC, 2019b). Whilst overall training of this kind can be beneficial, the limitations should be acknowledged. The EHRC assessed the effectiveness of unconscious bias training in 2018 and concluded that whilst it can reduce implicit bias, it is unlikely to eliminate it entirely (Atewologun, Cornish and Tresh, 2018). The EHRC found limited evidence to suggest that such training can change behaviours. However, more sophisticated, interactive training is more likely to result in a greater awareness of implicit bias for participants. Universities are therefore encouraged to consider and evaluate their unconscious bias training formats carefully to maximise the effectiveness of such training.

Our engagement with the sector on this issue suggests that, preferably:

training should be interactive and face to face, so that colleagues can challenge one another and confront their biases, as opposed to passive online training

training should not be a one-off activity that allows a box to be ticked and not revisited; it is not a 'quick fix' and is unlikely to eliminate implicit bias
universities should ensure familiarity with the EHRC's recommendations (Atewologun, Cornish and Tresh, 2018)

training should go beyond the remit of recruitment to include engagement with students, teaching and assessment

as part of a long-term institutional willingness to address unconscious bias, staff should be encouraged to enact their training and formally provide evidence of how they mitigate their biases on an ongoing basis – an example of which might include employees evidencing their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion



Enhancing ethnic diversity within academia: The primary challenge in developing racially diverse university environments is the lack of BAME academic and senior staff members. A common theme raised by BAME students through our engagement was the knock-on impact that not having any teacher who 'looks like me' has on a sense of belonging and aspiration, engagement and attainment.

Taking steps to review curriculums and teaching and learning practices: Although equality impact assessments can be fairly commonplace, for example in parts of the public sector, reviews of a university's curriculums can be difficult to get started, and at times such intended steps can be viewed as controversial. Nonetheless, universities should consider the merits of doing so as part of any wider commitment to improving equality of opportunity. It is vital that any reviews are undertaken in partnership with students.

UCL Inclusive Curriculum Health Check

UCL established its Inclusive Curriculum Health Check in 2018, based on the Inclusive Curriculum Framework created by Kingston University London, leading a HEFCE funded consortium project. A guide (UCL, 2018) has been created to assist staff in developing an inclusive curriculum with a checklist for considering content, delivery and assessment of programmes.

The checklist is a mandated action that will be used in the UCL Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) process. UCL plans to:

- appoint and train students as inclusive curriculum partners
- implement online and face-to-face unconscious bias training
- develop a system for anonymous reporting of racist behaviour

University of Oxford Curriculum Reviews

The University of Oxford held three high-profile lectures to open conversations around curriculum reviews, with the following speakers:

Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies

Professor Homi Bhabha, Anne F. Rothenburg Professor of the Humanities and Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University

Professor Ruth Simmons, Former President of Brown University, and first black president of an Ivy League institution

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Glasgow Caledonian University built intercultural awareness workshops into modules and made them available to students in all schools to help students develop an understanding of different cultural norms and values which will be useful in their academic or professional careers.

The concept belongs to Student Vice-President Yetunde Ogedengbe, who spotted a gap in student learning. The programme provides a baseline for first-year students to develop their understanding and recognise the unconscious bias that exists within global academic, social and working environments.

The workshop has been developed to be sustainable within the teaching curriculum. It picked up one of the Student Engagement 2019 Awards run by sparqs, and was shortlisted for an NUS Scotland 2019 diversity award.





At the University of Dundee, master's-level social work students undertake compulsory modules on decision-making and research methods that aim to decolonise the curriculum and support cultural and religious diversity in learning and teaching. The project builds on professional and inclusive practices inside the classroom, including an understanding of non-Western approaches to ethics such as Buddhist, Islamic and Confucian approaches and argumentation.

The project concerns not only what is taught, but how it is taught and changing understandings of whose knowledge it is, so that the voices of BAME students are not marginalised. Inclusive practice is informed by criticalities of identity and power, and parallel lives exercises that debunk the notion of symmetry of experience between students. The learning materials introduce community speakers, concepts of the self and research methods drawn from the subcontinent.

The project is ongoing, but initial reflection has highlighted the importance of buy-in from other staff who can approach equality issues through the lens of sameness rather than diversity of approach to achieve equality of outcomes. Experience has also found that alternative learning techniques such as decolonial work can be perceived as confrontational and can take more time in a classroom environment than a traditional curriculum. The modules are open to other master's students within the School of Education and Social Work on an elective basis.



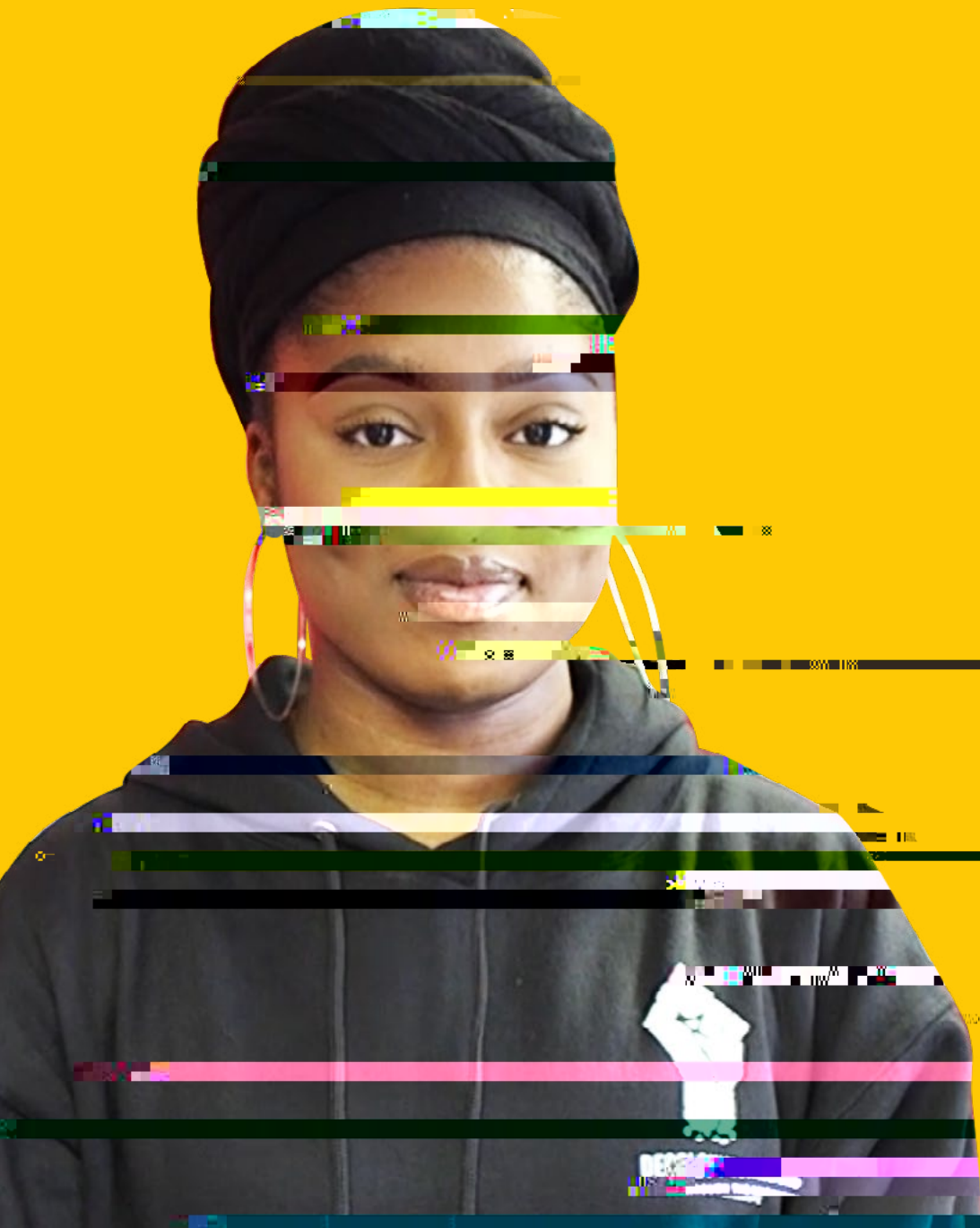
SOAS has created a Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors. The work has been led by the Decolonising SOAS Working Group.

The toolkit acts as a briefing on what ‘decolonising’ learning and teaching might entail. At its root it is about making what we teach and how we teach it more responsive to the problems of colonial and racialised privilege and discrimination within our teaching practice.

It is not a set of prescriptions but a set of suggestions and ideas for colleagues and students to think through, individually and collectively. It is animated by a spirit of critical dialogue within education, and is also connected to wider institutional questions about the principles and practices of good teaching – in particular work on racialised attainment and inclusive pedagogy.

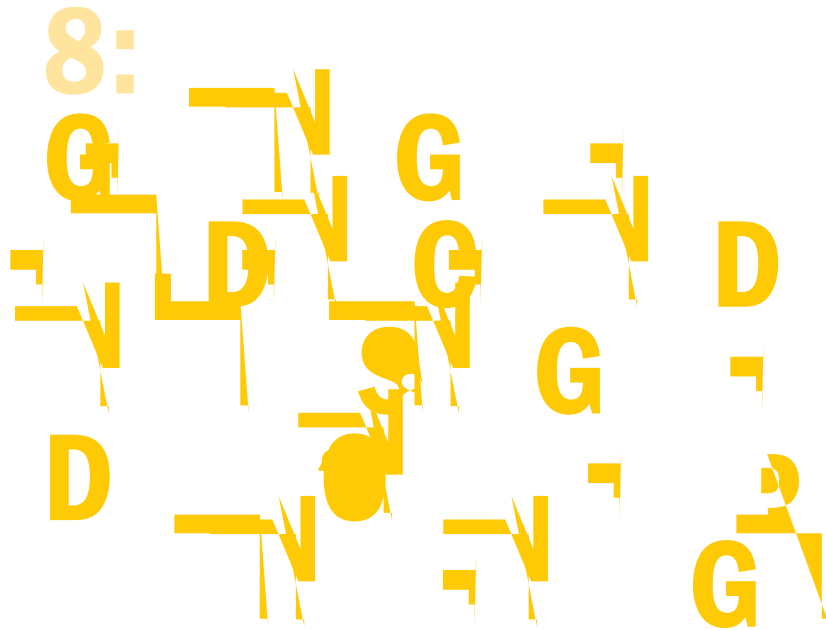
The SOAS Academic Board also approved the Decolonising SOAS Vision and Action Plan in November 2017. This vision outlines SOAS’ wider commitments to address the need for decolonisation within the school, in addition to curriculum review processes.

“I would like to see more diversity in staf at the university. There is currently a barrier there, which more diverse staf would help to overcome. It helps to





Our findings suggest that universities should consider:



When considering the practical initiatives and interventions to remove attainment differentials, access to the right types of evidence and data can ensure evidence-based judgements are made. Relevant university staff need access to a suite of evidence in order to understand both the scale and scope of their institution's attainment gap and the lived experiences of BAME students over the whole student lifecycle.

The sector needs to take a more scientific approach to tackling the attainment gap, gathering and scrutinising data in a far more comprehensive way than currently, in order to inform discussions among university leaders, academics, practitioners and students. This could well require granular,

Many staff in universities have access to detailed, granular data to inform their internal conversations about their attainment gap, but not all do. In some cases, this can perhaps be due to a lack of staff capacity or analytical expertise. Comprehensive attainment-gap data that controls



Having the right data: University staff told us that their biggest challenge in this area was in accessing the required data, especially at a granular programme level. Once granular, disaggregated and intersectional data is available, both the dataset and the intersectional factors become very complex. Qualified statisticians or analysts may therefore be needed to explain and make full use of this data, although this would not be straightforward for certain institutions. This is equally important in circumstances where the validity of the data is called into question or individuals reject the findings.

Using data limitations as an excuse not to push ahead:

A frustration some university staff and students experienced was an over-reliance on data and data collection. Data collection activities, or a lack of data, were sometimes used as reasons to avoid action on removing the attainment gap. Where there was a perceived lack of evidence in what really works to remove the attainment gap, or it was felt that outcomes would be difficult to measure, there were some tendencies to avoid taking any action at all. This approach was likely exacerbated by feelings of unease in talking about race. Consequently, while access to comprehensive data is valuable, it is equally important that repetitive data collection does not become the enemy of action: we received examples whereby individuals sceptical about there being an attainment gap would simply request more and more data, delaying action and progress. Universities have a moral and legal duty to ensure the success of all students and therefore must act where there is an apparent inequality.

Value Added Dashboard

Value Added Dashboard

Kingston University London is leading on a project with the University of Hertfordshire, University of Wolverhampton, University of Greenwich, De Montfort University and UCL, funded by the OfS.

They have produced a value added (VA) dashboard that has enabled a much more nuanced understanding of attainment gaps at programme level.

Value Added Dashboard

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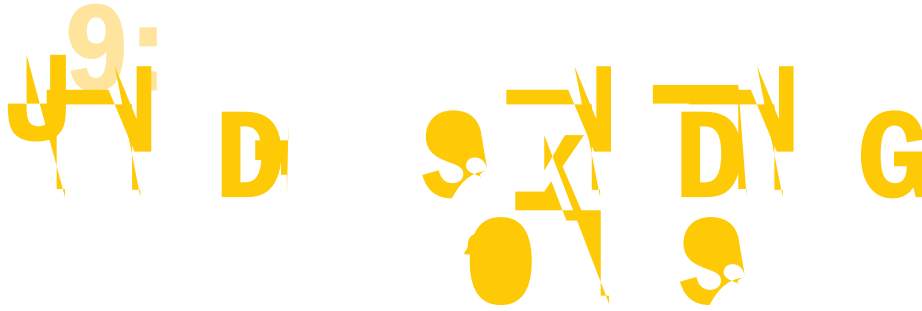


In 2018, a Cardiff University campaign to ensure the voices of BAME students are heard reached the National Assembly for Wales as part of Black History Month. The #ITooAmCardiff exhibition featured freestanding images of BAME students accompanied by their own inspiring words to share their experiences of being a BAME student on campus.

It was modelled on a social media campaign created by students at Harvard University. The exhibition, sponsored by Vaughan Gething AM, the Assembly Member for Cardiff South and Penarth, was on display at the National Assembly for Wales' Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay from 26 October to 30 November 2018.

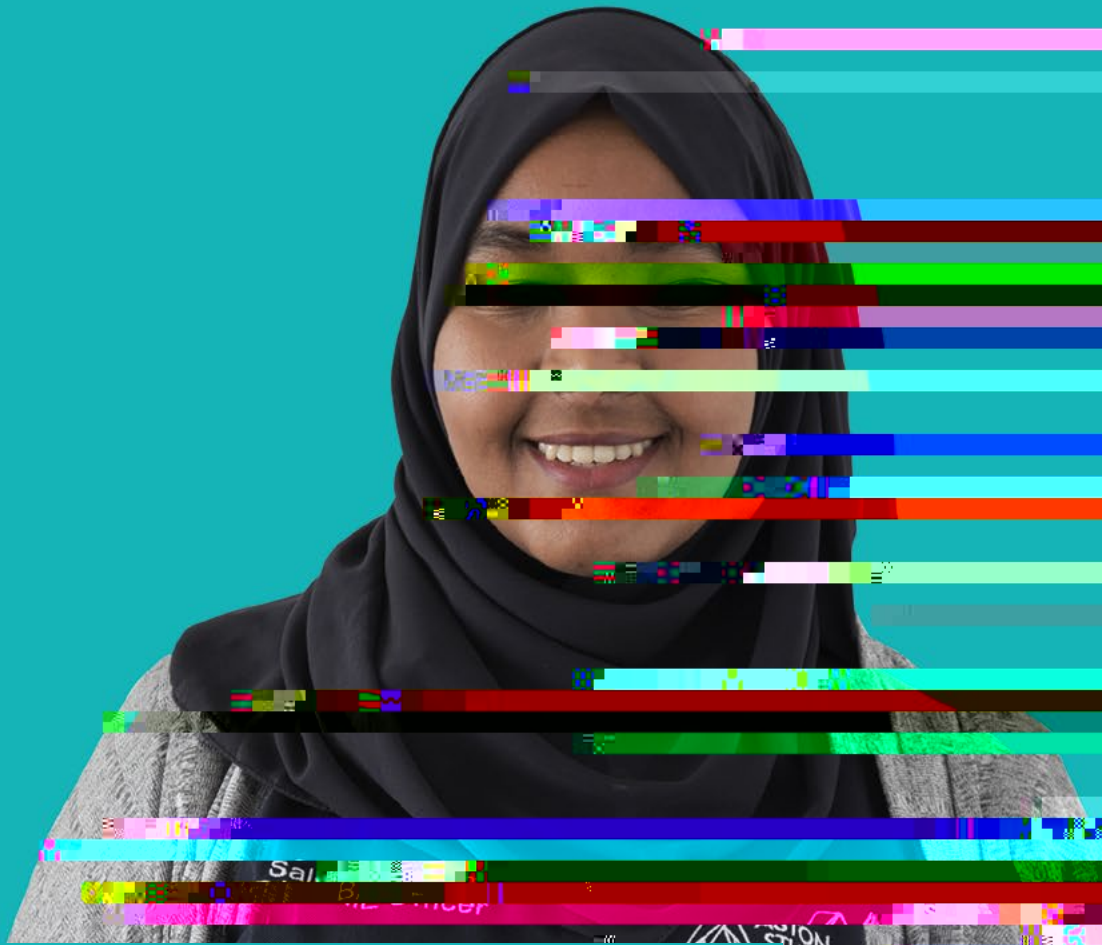
Cardiff University's Equality and Diversity Project Officer, Susan Cousins, was behind the #ITooAmCardiff campaign aiming to raise awareness of the BAME student journey.

CO 2019



Universities will be at different stages in following the steps to success identified in this report so far. However, a consistent block to improving

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“It’s understandable that staff might not know what BAME students go through and the issues they face; but it’s about being open to understanding and learning about these.”

Salma, Aston University

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Each university is unique in its context, whether that be in academic disciplines, institutional structure or locality. Our research and other writing in this area also note the importance of acknowledging the differences in experiences between ethnic groups, in addition to other intersections such as gender and socio-economic backgrounds. The size of, and reasons for, the attainment gap might vary between ethnic groups. It is important that interventions are therefore tailored to individual university contexts and student populations (Thomas, Hill, O'Mahony and Yorke, 2017).

To understand racial equity is to understand the difference in starting points for individual students. Some interventions aiming to remove the attainment gap could result in attainment being improved for all students, but without removing the discrepancy between White and BAME students, because White students might be, on average, starting at a higher level of attainment at the point of intervention. Jacqueline Stevenson et al's (2019) report on ethnicity targeting written for the OfS, describes two different types of targeted interventions:

Inclusive interventions designed to benefit all students but in particular one or more minority ethnic groups

למד את המסע - המסע לאדם

Stevenson et al.'s research suggests there is value for universities in



When devising interventions, university staf told us they were looking

Understanding the appropriateness of targeting: Significant challenges exist in knowing what works in interventions for tackling the BAME attainment gap. First, in deciding whom to target in an intervention, universities need to decide when it would be suitable to use inclusive or exclusive interventions, and whether a particular ethnic group would be more appropriate in any targeting than all BAME students. Universities with smaller BAME student populations may find it more challenging to target specific ethnic groups. Interventions must also avoid a deficit approach that could further isolate students.

Ensuring transparency and openness: The purpose of interventions needs to be clear to students. If there is open communication about the attainment gap, but not about the measures used to remove it, this could have a negative influence on BAME students' perceptions of their institution and thus the student experience. A challenge can also exist in encouraging BAME students to take part in interventions relating to the attainment gap, whether that is because of a lack of incentive, time constraints or a lack of awareness.

Evaluating the impact of initiatives: When evaluating the impact of initiatives, a common issue is difficulty in attributing an impact to a particular intervention. Often, several interventions will run concurrently,

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The University of Brighton established its Widening Participation Achievement Team (WiPAT) in January 2017 to lead on its institutional approach to student retention, success and progression. The project work includes:

- using course-level attainment-gap data analysis to start conversations with academics and examine student intersectionalities
- developing the student success framework
- planning Advance HE unconscious bias workshops for academic staff
- revising the definitions of inclusivity and inclusive practice
- conducting an anonymous marking pilot
- working in partnership with the students' union.

A further £75,000 of funding is committed for 2018–19 for initiatives and interventions that are directed at the BAME attainment gap, funded from access agreement funds. The University of Brighton has seen a reduction of 6% over three years in the BAME attainment gap and 8% in the Black attainment gap.



The University of Portsmouth's Raising Awareness and Aspiration project assessed the impact of personal tutoring on reducing the attainment gap. It is funded by the OfS from 2017 to 2019, in partnership with the University of Sheffield and King's College London. Portsmouth has built, piloted and successfully rolled out a personal tutoring platform in 2018.

The platform enables all personal tutors to connect with their personal tutees, with a specific focus on personally welcoming all BAME students and, through both individual and group activities, opening opportunities for them to make friends with their peers.



In 2016, SOAS Students' Union published *Degrees of racism: A qualitative investigation into ethnicity attainment gaps at SOAS* (SOAS, 2016). SOAS has implemented a number of interventions as a result of the findings of this report, including the creation of two working groups focusing on the attainment gap and decolonisation activities. Interventions include:

- development of a learning and teaching toolkit for academic staff to interrogate their curriculum and pedagogy

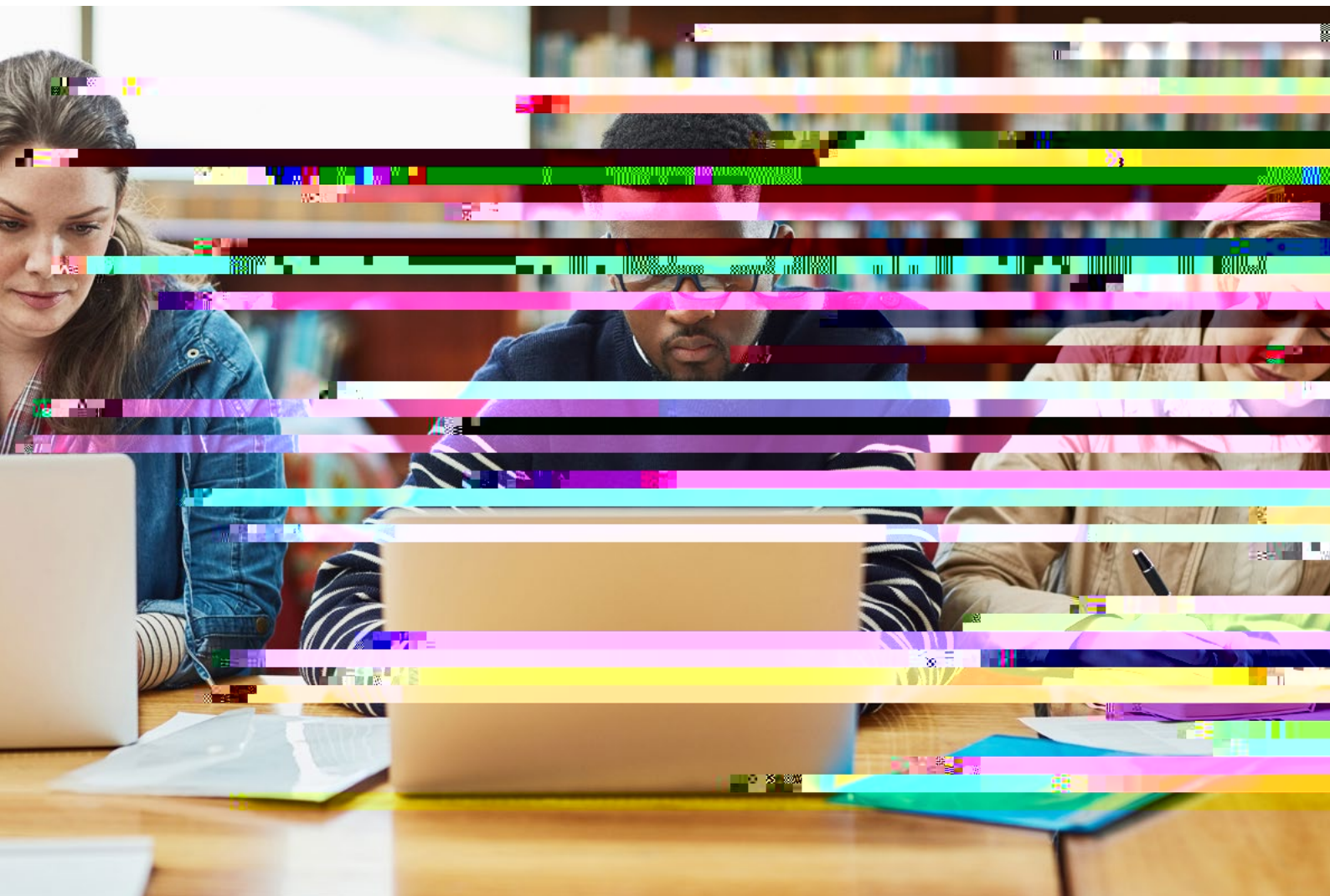
- addition of questions regarding decolonisation to the annual programme review process and to student evaluation of modules questionnaires

- piloting of a BAME mentoring programme in which staff from BAME backgrounds mentor students from BAME backgrounds

In addition, UUK and NUS heard from organisations outside higher education – including schools – whose challenges in addressing ethnic disparities overlap with those set out in this report. The government is already reporting data on ethnic disparities across different parts of civil society through its Race Disparity Audit, but to date has not moved as far as identifying common factors that underpin or help create these disparities. In the light of this, this report also recommends that:

the UK government’s Race Disparity Audit considers how it can support different parts of UK civil society – including universities – that are addressing similar structural challenges, and draws together evidence on how different types of organisations have achieved success.

In the meantime, UUK and NUS have created a collection of case studies for universities to share practice, and we strongly encourage universities and student unions to engage with this.





UUK and NUS are calling on universities to accelerate efforts to remove the BAME attainment gap. Vice-chancellors and senior leaders have a crucial role in leading a whole-institution approach to change, by opening up conversations about race and building a racially diverse and inclusive environment.

Students value the transparency that accompanies joined-up working between their university and students' union to remove ethnicity attainment gaps. The voices and lived experiences of BAME students can be fundamental to informing universities' decision-making and planned activities. All students should feel equally that they belong at their university; linked to this, the students we engaged with as part of this work want to see BAME role models in their institution's leadership teams, practitioners and staff.

Meanwhile, those with any level of responsibility for addressing attainment differentials need a sufficiently detailed understanding of intersectional differences and ethnic groups to assist in the recognition of the extent of inequalities that BAME students face. Disaggregated programme-level data could therefore be invaluable for institutions with larger BAME student populations.

Many universities are measuring attainment differentials to varying extents of complexity and have implemented interventions designed to remove the gaps. Some institutions are leading the way in setting strategic targets and KPIs for removing inequalities in attainment, while others are relatively new on their journey. We would like to see further action, commitment and impact from the higher education sector in reducing and ultimately eliminating this longstanding ethnic disparity. Doing so will take time, but there are some clear directions of travel that could demonstrate a renewed level of commitment.

UUK and NUS would like to see:

an increase in the percentage of universities recognising attainment differences

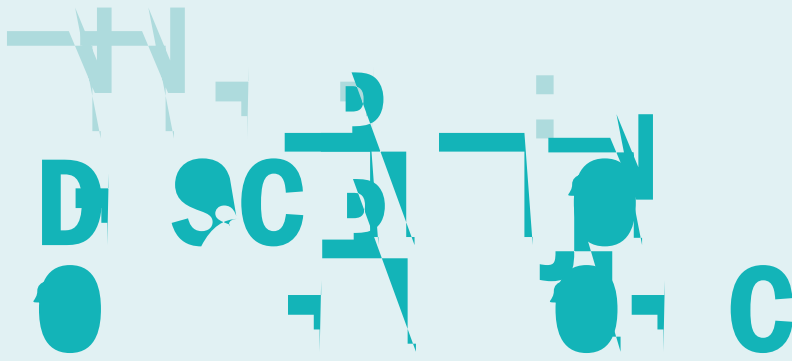
increased awareness of how to support BAME students among university staff

better understanding of BAME students' perceptions, including where this is linked to their sense of belonging

appropriate disaggregation within the broad BAME category, ensuring that practices and initiatives reflect that this 'group' consists of individuals with varied experiences and needs

In particular, this has to be the start of a journey on which higher education leaders are active, and working with students, to achieve results in addressing issues around race, ethnicity and attainment. UUK and NUS will evaluate how far the sector has come in early 2020.





The project was launched on 6 June 2018 by UUK and NUS with a call for evidence seeking universities' and student representatives' experiences of the barriers faced by BAME students within the higher education sector, and possible routes to success for closing the attainment gap.

UUK's and NUS' calls for evidence were circulated as surveys, aimed primarily at practitioners/staff at institutions and students respectively. The surveys were designed to help us understand:

- what attainment gap data there is and how it is being used
- the factors contributing to BAME attainment gaps
- interventions that have been implemented and their impact
- any gaps in practice and knowledge
- challenges in bringing about changes to institutional cultures
- the existence of barriers to undertaking work to address these gaps
- whether further evidence is needed

UUK received 44 completed surveys, while there were 69 responses to the NUS survey.

Owing to the important role of leadership in tackling the BAME attainment gap, a vice-chancellors' working group was established to:

- provide feedback and a strategic view on the areas of focus set out for the project, and its recommendations
- consider the role of vice-chancellors in helping to accelerate progress in reducing BAME attainment gaps

The selection of members was based on an expression of interest to be involved in the UUK–NUS project. Membership of the group was:

Baroness Valerie Amos CH, Director, SOAS University of London (Chair)

Professor Paul Boyle, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester

Professor Alec Cameron, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Aston University

Professor Karen Cox, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Kent

Professor Geof Layer, Vice-Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton

Professor Quintin McKellar, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Hertfordshire

Dame Minouche Shafik, Director, London School of Economics and Political Science

Professor Peter Slee, Vice-Chancellor, Leeds Beckett University

Professor Steven Spier, Vice-Chancellor, Kingston University London

Professor Sally Mapstone, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of St Andrews

Professor David Phoenix OBE, Vice-Chancellor, London South Bank University

Professor Sir Chris Husbands, Vice-Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University

Professor Steve West CBE, Vice-Chancellor, University of the West of England, Bristol

Thanks also go to Professor Jacqueline Stevenson and Aloma Onyemah from Sheffield Hallam University for their contributions and guidance.

A roundtable event was chaired by Baroness Amos on 6 July 2018. The roundtable was attended by students' union representatives, university practitioners and senior staff, as well as other key stakeholders, including from the UK government. The aim of the event was to draw on the expertise of the participants to inform the focus and direction of the research. The discussions substantively focused on:

- the major barriers to addressing the BAME attainment gap and what is needed to overcome these

- experiences of implementing initiatives to improve BAME student success and reduce the gap

- what success looks like

Five evidence sessions were subsequently held in October and November 2018 at: Aston University; University of the West of England, Bristol; Glasgow Caledonian University; Sheffield Hallam University; and London School of Economics and Political Science. The sessions were held with university leaders, staff, students and others outside the sector to:

- share experiences and learning from a variety of perspectives

- identify how to ensure effective collaboration between students and staff

- discuss what next steps are necessary to address the attainment gap

- inform UUK–NUS recommendations in this area

Over 150 representatives attended the five sessions; the discussions were structured around four key themes that had emerged from the initial call for evidence and roundtable event:

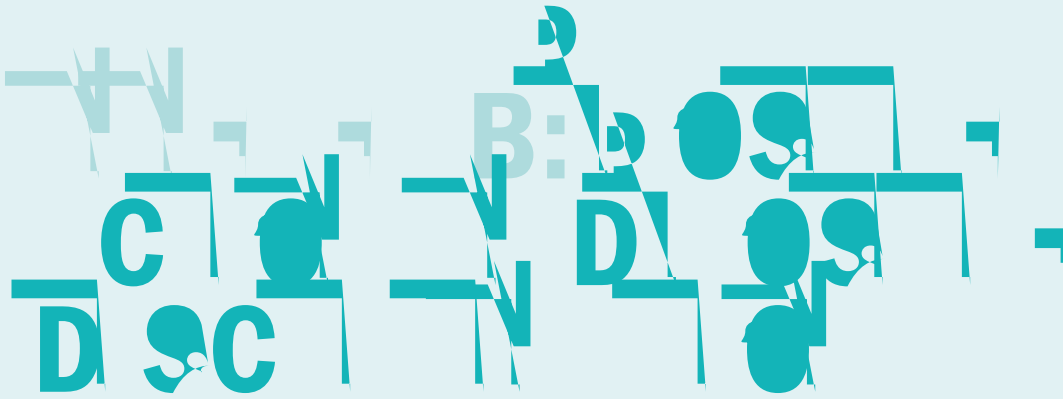
- Evidence

- Opening conversations around race

- Inclusive environments

- Initiatives and interventions

Before each evidence session, participants were encouraged to complete a UUK case study template, of which 17 were submitted. Case studies were used to capture information on a wide range of activity already under way or planned across the higher education sector, to enhance understanding of what works and what doesn't in tackling the BAME attainment gap.



To lawfully implement positive action, a university must reasonably think that students who share a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil-partnership⁷, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation):

- experience a disadvantage connected to that characteristic; or
- have needs that are different from the needs of persons who do not share that characteristic; or
- have disproportionately low participation in an activity compared to others who do not share that protected characteristic.

Examples could include:

- providing bursaries to obtain qualifications in a profession such as journalism for BAME students whose participation in that profession might be disproportionately low
- providing mentoring to BAME students to facilitate their progress into highly skilled employment
- providing employer visits and mock assessment centres for BAME students working with employers who wish to address an under-representation of BAME graduates in their workforce

Any actions would need to be proportionate to the disadvantage or under-representation faced by students with protected characteristics. The action must be justifiable with appropriate evidence, quantitative or qualitative, including student feedback data.

An example of positive discrimination, which is unlawful, would be providing BAME students with extra time to complete exams because of attainment gaps between BAME and White students. The only lawful exception to this practice is for disabled students, who can be treated more favourably and receive positive discrimination in their favour within the terms described in the Equality Act 2010.

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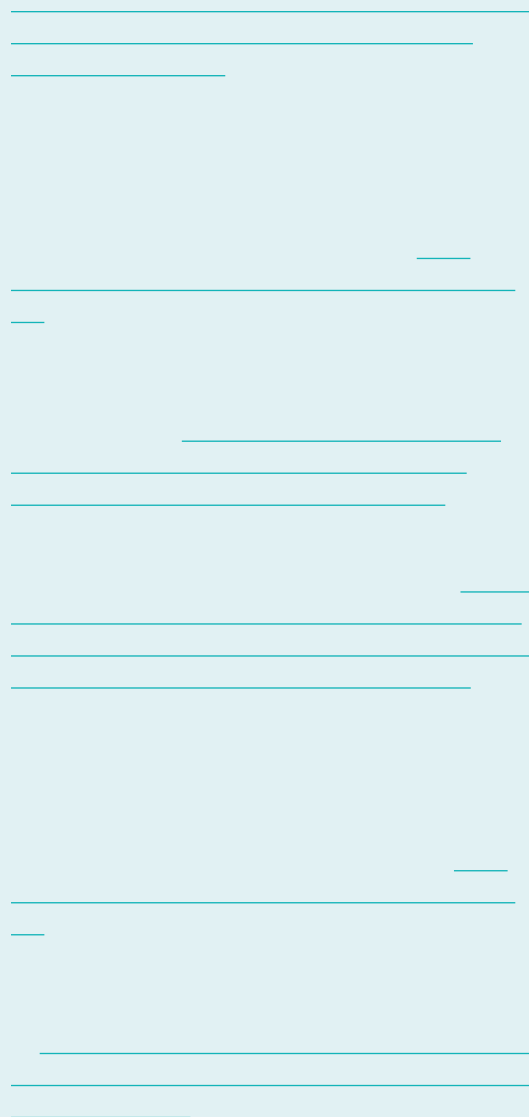
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