

School of Public Policy

inclusive curriculum report 2021/22

Anushka Srivastava, Radhika Trivedi, Sally Jordan, Samantha Heigl

See this report presented by the researchers: <https://youtu.be/xdd1zUCmucU>
If this project has informed your practice, let us know at lse.changemakers@lse.ac.uk

Background and Context

Previous Curriculum Inclusivity Reports in 2019 and 2020 have focused on analysing diversity in terms of the ethnicity and gender of the authors of prescribed readings for SPP courses. According to the Curriculum Inclusivity Report 2020-2021, out of the 40 SPP courses analysed, only 22% of the readings had women authors, and a mere 19.2% were authored by people of colour. This year, we extend this analysis to include course content of all courses, including examples, figures, and case studies used in classroom teaching for all MPA and MPP courses to evaluate regional diversity. We first engaged with both staff and students at the SPP to gauge their perceptions and experience of diversity in the SPP curriculum.

Student and Staff Engagement

In order to gauge student perception and experience with diversity, inclusion, and representation in the SPP's curriculum, we reached out to the entire MPA and MPP cohort by means of a survey. We had over 60 respondents, with over 70% claiming that a diverse curriculum is an extremely valuable part of their education at the LSE, but less than 10% believing that the SPP has excelled at including a variety of interests and perspectives in its modules.

We reached out to 13 staff, professors, teaching assistants, and fellows and interviewed 5. From those meetings there were three general themes that were communicated. First, from those staff that participated in interviews there was general support for further diversifying the curriculum and course reading lists. This led to a systematic discussion related to the need to recognize that there are some factors that prevent staff from fully diversifying mandatory readings as those who invented theories and concepts invented those in a time when academia was dominated by white males. Staff agreed on the importance of an inclusive curriculum and on the scope for improvement in the existing curriculum.

Methodology

As the third annual SPP Curriculum Report conducted by members of the SPP Womxn's Network, this report employed many of the same methodologies from previous iterations with one new component, specifically in order to provide comparable metrics to track progress. Following the LSE Change Maker guidelines, the research team completed a formal ethics review through LSE and created a data management plan to ensure the confidentiality of our interviewees and survey respondents.

The remainder of this section outlines the two components of this report and identifies the procedures and methods used for each. For both components, only courses being taught in the 2021-2022 academic year for the MPA and MPP programmes were analysed. Courses including

the Capstone, Policy Paper, Dissertation, and any executive course were not included in the analysis due to the vast contrast in course and programme structures. In the end, 29 courses were analysed for their reading lists and lecture content.

Reading Lists

The researchers obtained a file from the LSE Library containing all essential readings for PP-coded courses in the 2021-2022 academic year. Only essential reading lists were analysed, since this report is focused on the course content that SPP students interact with the most while enrolled in a course. Additional readings do not reflect the majority of students' experiences as they are not required by the course convenors. The file from the library was then organised by individual course and the readings were separated by author(s). If one reading had multiple authors, each author was coded as its own data point. Furthermore, authors were counted as many times as they appeared on a course's essential reading list (e.g., articles from the same author) to accurately capture each author's contribution to course material.

The researchers then identified the gender and ethnicity (using the UK's definition of BAME) of each author. Since this research was also conducted for last year's report, the researchers compared the 2021-2022 essential reading list with the 2020-2021 essential reading list for the courses that were offered in both academic years and used many of the same data points. For new SPP courses and new readings, the researchers used multiple sources of information to find the gender and ethnicity of the authors including LinkedIn, author CVs, social media, and author biographies on institutions' websites.

Gender was identified by any public information that captured authors' gender identity. It is presented in the analysis as binary, and the researchers acknowledge the limitation of doing so. Further research should be done to capture all genders to obtain a more comprehensive depiction of the reading lists. Ethnicity was measured when explicitly stated. As this research was conducted in the UK, the researchers chose to use the UK's definition of BAME, and acknowledge the limitation of doing so, i.e., that the term masks the nuances of different ethnicities that fall into the BAME category and oversimplifies this integral component. Further research should be conducted to include a better representation of the racial and ethnic identities of authors.

Course Content

While the reading list analysis was carried over from previous reports, the new addition to this report is the analysis of course lecture content. The researchers went through the course material of the 29 SPP courses to identify which countries and regions were being discussed during lectures. Analysing the countries and regions discussed in courses provides a new lens through which to view the SPP curriculum in terms of diversity and inclusion. Moreover, the research team's decision to include this component in the report was bolstered by the survey responses from SPP students.

To analyse courses, researchers self-enrolled to the respective course on Moodle, gaining access to the lecture material. Only lecture material was analysed for consistency, since lectures are what the majority of students enrolled in a course are equally exposed to: several courses (e.g., PP478) have multiple seminar leaders that may introduce different concepts to their sub-set of the class, whereas lectures are given by the same person to the entire class. The

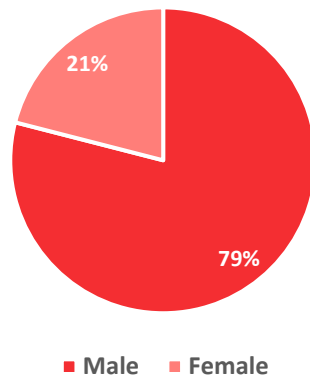
researchers analysed multiple forms of course material including lecture slides, case studies, and problem sets that included specific country datasets where relevant. Courses were analysed for each week of lecture material, including both Autumn Term and Winter Term for one-unit courses.

The researchers identified all countries and their respective regionsⁱ as discussed in each course. If multiple countries were included in the lecture material for a given week, each one was coded as its own unit. For example, a discussion on a case study from Portugal and an example referencing the United States would be coded as two different countries and regions. Additionally, if one country was referenced in different examples during one lecture that country was coded as many times as it appeared in order to capture its influence on the course material.

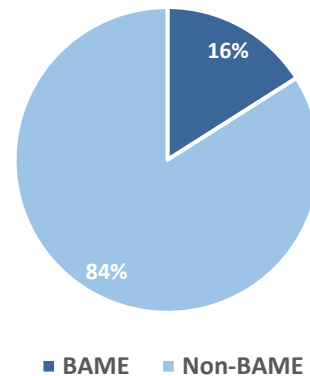
Aggregate Resultsⁱⁱ

a) Analysis of Author demographics in Reading Lists

Gender of Authors (%)

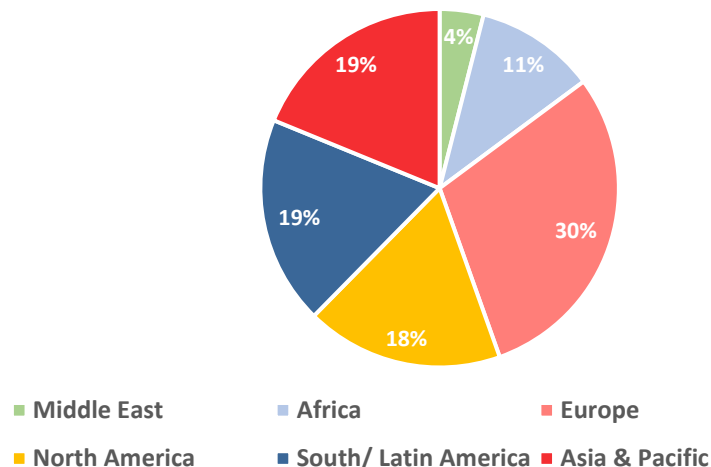


Ethnicity of Authors (%)



b) Analysis of Regional Representation in Course Content

Course Content Regional Analysis (%)



Policy Recommendations

Implement a programme survey at the end of the year and include diversity and inclusion questions in course level surveys. Specific questions regarding a course's diversity and inclusivity in the lecture content and reading lists should be added to the course TQARO surveys at the end of each term. Instead of leaving these as optional open-ended questions, the project team recommends they be multiple choice or include a scale of measurement. Additionally, the SPP should implement a department wide survey that will highlight students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion in the SPP overall.

Include the regional breakdown of content and areas of emphasis in the course syllabus. Each course should include the areas of emphasis and the geographic regions covered throughout the module in the syllabus. This should especially be the case if course convenors do not have the capacity to update the reading lists or the lecture material.

The SPP should conduct its own annual curriculum review. With the department have greater capabilities, resources and time, auditing and analysing the current curriculum and course content can provide a unique opportunity to find opportunities for improvement and innovation with the programme and the department as a whole.

Publicize gender and diversity metrics to enhance transparency within the SPP. This would include a numeric breakdown on the SPP website on various diversity metrics (i.e., gender identity, ethnicity, background, etc.) of staff, professors, fellows, and students. By being transparent with the current level of representation and potentially the year over year differences, this would illustrate to current and prospective students that diversity is something that the SPP prides itself on and is making a concerted effort to continue to improve.

Create an SPP equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) committee. Identify a select group of LSE and SPP personnel who can provide support to the SPP in course development and analyse current course materials, identify opportunities to source more diverse readings and case studies, and incorporate diverse opinions and thoughts into the curriculum.

ⁱ We used these Regional Classifications from the International Telecommunications Union to code the material.

ⁱⁱ Detailed breakdowns for the reading list and course content results across all 29 courses can be found in the full-length report.

ⁱⁱⁱ A more comprehensive list of short-and long-term policy recommendations can be found in the full-length report.