

# Report: Addressing BME Attainment Gaps at Key British Universities

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## Executive Summary

This report analyses the different ways in which key universities in the United Kingdom (specifically England) have been involved in initiatives to reduce the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) attainment gaps at their institutions. The aim is to gain a better awareness of different ways the London School of Economics and Political Science might want to take to address the School's own BME attainment gaps (and other attainment gaps more widely).

There are two major parts to the report: an analysis of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions from eighteen different universities to understand how they present their own work on reducing BME attainment gaps; and an analysis of four major Office for Students (OfS) funded projects that run across these same institutions. Through these two levels of analysis, the report then offers seven recommendations for what the School could do to address BME attainment gaps. These recommendations are meant to be taken as a holistic approach and not as a menu from which to pick and choose.

Through a thematic analysis of the eighteen TEF submissions, four major themes appeared in terms of how universities discussed the importance of BME attainment gaps and the need to reduce them. These four themes were:

1. The use of provider contextualisation to highlight the levels of diversity at each the institution: Thirteen of the eighteen universities explicitly discussed their BME students, both home and international. It demonstrated a level of awareness that ethnic and national diversity play an explicit role in Teaching Excellence.
2. Holistically addressing inclusivity throughout the entire TEF submission: Ten of the eighteen universities embedded the concept of 'Positive Outcomes for All' and supporting BME and diverse students throughout the entire narrative. This demonstrated an understanding that inclusion is part of every aspect of Teaching Excellence, and not simply a bolt on issue:
3. Explicitly discussed BME students and attainment gaps in their 'Positive Outcomes for All' section of the TEF. All eighteen universities did this, often referring back to their institutional context.
4. Use of value-based education as a justification for being focused on addressing attainment gaps: Five of the eighteen universities cited values such as equity, transformative education and inclusive communities as a means of justifying the need to reduce or close BME attainment gaps.

The four example projects that are currently being funded by the OfS were analysed to understand four broad ways in which BME attainment gaps are being addressed institutionally. These projects are multi-institutional and currently underway, most having reached their halfway point. By analysing these different types of approaches, it provides multiple avenues that the School may wish to employ. The four approaches and their corresponding OfS projects were:

1. Structural Approach: The 'Value-Added Metric and Inclusive Curriculum Framework' project used this approach. It addresses attainment gaps by changing the structures around curriculum design and review (along with explicit training and research conferences). This involves naming high level members of staff to be accountable.
2. Personalised Learning Approach: The 'Raising Awareness, Raising Attainment' project used this approach. It addresses attainment gaps by completely redesigning the personal tutorial systems (at LSE this would be the Academic Mentoring). This includes creating systems to personal tutors, recognition for good practice in personal tutoring, and creating academic line management for personal tutors.

3. Everyday Racism and Implicit Bias Approach: The 'Changing Mindsets' project takes this approach. It addresses attainment gaps by training *all* academic staff and *all* students on implicit bias, stereotype threat, and how these two interplay to create incidents of everyday racism and micro-aggressions. The training also involves how to both recognise (internally and externally) and intervene.
4. Individualised Post-Racial Approach: The 'Student Attainment Project' takes this approach. It addresses attainment gaps by providing support for individual students to be able to achieve better marks on key assessments in their modules and programmes. This report notes that this approach is highly controversial and widely critiqued because it assumes that BME attainment gaps are caused by student deficit rather than institutional and structural racism.

Based on the analysis of the four projects as case studies for the types of approaches universities take to address BME attainment gaps as well as the themes emerging from the TEF narratives, this report makes seven tentative recommendations for what the School should do to *begin* to address the gaps. As was stated earlier, these are *not* a menu to choose from, but rather a list of actions that the School should take concurrently. Also, further research will need to be done at the institutional level to better understand the BME attainment gaps at LSE in order to flush out and develop these recommendations further. These seven recommendations are that the School should:

1. Research the underlying issues that may be contributing to the BME attainment gap at LSE through focus groups and interviews;
2. Monitor annually BME attainment gaps both at institutional and departmental levels, and make those numbers publicly available;
3. Explicitly link a values-based education to eliminating BME attainment gaps;
4. Name specific senior members of staff as being accountable for closing BME attainment gaps within each department;
5. Implement an inclusive curriculum framework for programme review and new programme design;
6. Explore how LSE's Academic Mentors can be used to create the type of personalised learning that can potentially impact attainment gaps;
7. Monitor both which students comes to LSE LIFE and how attending these sessions might be influencing attainment gaps (if at all).

## Introduction

This report analyses the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions of 18 universities across the United Kingdom to understand how they are conceptualising their responsibilities to closing BME attainment gaps, and how these institutions claim to be addressing the gaps on the institutional level. Through the use of thematic analysis, the report highlights common ways in which these institutions frame the issues and justify their work, within the framing of 'Positive Outcomes for All'. It also takes note of any unique claims from specific TEF submissions.

It then analyses four multi-institutional Office for Students (OfS) funded projects with the direct aim of lowering BME attainment gaps. While there are many more projects being funded by OfS on this topic, these were the largest projects receiving funding. They also offer a diverse glimpse into the way BME attainment gaps are being conceptualised and addressed. Specifically,

- *Using Value-Added Metrics and Inclusive Curriculum Framework* offers an understanding of an institution-wide, curricular and structural approach
- *Raising Awareness, Raising Attainment* offers an understanding of a personalised learning approach
- *Changing Mindsets* offers a social psychology approach that aims to reduce stereotype threat and implicit biases
- *Student Attainment Project* offers a student-focused, remedial instruction / academic skills approach

Finally, based on the TEF submission and the OfS project analysis, this report offers some initial recommendations for how the LSE may consider addressing BME attainment gaps (as well as any other attainment gaps that may need addressing). These recommendations are based solely on what has been done at the institutions analysed and would need to be tempered by research on the BME student experience at LSE.

## Institutions Analysed

This section offers a brief introduction to the institutions whose TEF narratives are analysed then analysed. These institutions were chosen due to their involvement in publically funded projects aimed at narrowing BME attainment gaps, the amount of publically available information regarding their commitment to narrowing BME attainment gaps, and/or their TEF scores on Positive Outcomes for All related metrics.

### Universities and their respective TEF scores and involvement in OfS funded projects:

Universities Compared	TEF Score	External funding to improve attainment gaps			
		Changing Mindsets	Raising Awareness Raising Attainment	VA metrics & Inclusive Curriculum	Student Attainment Project
Canterbury Christ Church University	Silver	√			
DeMontfort University	Gold			√	
Kings College London	Silver		√		
Kingston University London	Bronze			√ †	
Loughborough University	Gold				
Southampton Solent University	Silver				√
University College London	Silver			√	
University of Brighton	Silver	√			
University of Derby	Gold				√ †
University of Essex	Gold				
University of Greenwich	Silver			√	
University of Hertfordshire	Gold			√	
University of Portsmouth	Gold	√ †	√		
University of Sheffield	Silver		√ †		
University of the Arts London	Silver	√			
University of West London	Silver				√
University of Winchester	Silver	√			
University of Wolverhampton	Silver			√	

## TEF Narratives: Valuing equality in learning and outcomes

In analysing the TEF narratives for these eighteen universities, several trends appear.

Firstly, a majority of the TEF narratives analysed (13/18) **explicitly discuss their BME students (both home and international) in their institutional contextualisation**. This seems to demonstrate an awareness that the ethnic diversity plays an explicit role in the institutions Teaching Excellence and how it addresses these.

Secondly, more than half of the TEF narratives analysed (10/18) **embed the concept of Positive Outcomes for All and supporting BME students (as well as other diverse populations) throughout the entire narrative**, and not just in the section 'Positive Outcomes for All'.

Thirdly, all of the narratives **explicitly engage with BME students, attainment gaps (BME, gender, international / home, first generation, and/or low socioeconomic status), and student success within the section 'Positive Outcomes for All'**, many of which refer back to their institutional context. This is in sharp contrast with LSE's TEF narrative which only mentioned BME students in the context of exceeding graduate-level benchmarks for leavers (without referring to an internal comparison with white students).

None of these narratives justify large attainment gaps – rather, they all accept attainment gaps as unacceptable and detail their specific actions to address them, be it through programme design, building community, or developing employability skills and opportunities.

A few of the TEF narratives were notable in their **use values-based education** as reason enough to be heavily focused on attainment gaps and equality, citing such values such as equity, transformative education, and inclusive communities (5/18).

### Provider Contextualisation

Each TEF narrative opens with a contextual understanding of institution. This can address things such as (but not limited to) student demographics, physical location of the school, international reputation, comparisons to the rest of the sector, and / or institutional educational culture and values. Thirteen of the eighteen universities explicitly refer to their diverse students as an essential element to understanding the institutional context. These thirteen are:

1. Canterbury Christ Church University
2. King's College London (KCL)
3. Kingston University London
4. University College London (UCL)
5. University of Brighton
6. University of Derby
7. University of Essex
8. University of Greenwich
9. University of Hertfordshire
10. University of Portsmouth
11. University of Sheffield
12. University of the Arts London
13. University of West London (UWL)

Some institutions like, UWL and Brighton, focus on their number of first generation students and low socio-economic status students, while others discuss their international diversity, such as University

of Essex and UCL. Within these, BME students are also discussed. For example, the University of Brighton writes:

...the University recognises that there are some age, ethnicity and gender outcomes revealed in the split metrics which need resolution. We are addressing this... with clear inclusivity expectations, supporting awareness raising and development for staff, and introducing new equality and diversity training as a requirement for all staff.

Meanwhile, Greenwich highlights that:

...with a substantial proportion of students who are from BAME backgrounds (50%)... UoG has focused its teaching and learning objectives on adding value and maximising success for all its students.

Both KCL and Essex do not mention their BME student population in the context, but do highlight their diversity in terms of international students, with KCL claiming:

We have more than 9,300 international students from some 150 countries making up over 35% of the total student body

and Essex writing (after describing the diversity of socio-economic status and low participating neighbourhoods):

We are internationally diverse too: in 2015-16, over 5,000 students were drawn from outside the UK (including over 3,000 from outside the EU), with 141 countries represented in our student body.

By highlighting the diversity of their students in their institutional contexts, these TEF narratives offer institutions the chance to highlight the importance of diversity in their learning and teaching practices and interventions. It makes clear they recognise their students are not homogenous, that student journeys are multiple, and that as a university engaged in educating, they need to consider all students, and the uniqueness that specific characteristics and backgrounds offer, to be able to offer positive outcomes for all. Diverse students means a need to focus on inclusive education to guarantee equity for attainment. Therefore, the first step seems to be to explicitly describe and name the levels of diversity as a part of understanding institutional context.

### Holistically Addressing Inclusivity

Over half of the TEF narratives analysed seemed to take a holistic approach to discussing issues of inclusion and diverse students. This means that the needs of diverse students, including BME students, are discussed in each section of the TEF submission – teaching quality, learning environment, and student outcomes and learning gain. The eleven universities that took this approach are:

1. De Montfort University
2. King's College London
3. Kingston University London
4. University College London
5. University of Brighton
6. University of Greenwich
7. University of Hertfordshire
8. University of Sheffield
9. University of the Arts London



10. University of West London

11. University of Wolverhampton

By writing about diversity / inclusion at some point in all sections of the TEF narrative, it implies that these universities have taken an integrated approach to student attainment, which is considered at all levels of the university structures. For example, the Kingston University refers to inclusion, diversity and specifically BME students a total of 50 times across their 15 page TEF narrative. BME attainment was explicitly referenced to in their Provider Context in relation to their 'holistic approach', and then they demonstrate this throughout the submission. Specifically they discuss their use of the value-added metric to annually monitor attainment gaps (see p. for more information), and their development of in-classroom practice, inclusive practice. They discuss co-curricular initiatives to develop Student Leadership and Student Associate Programme and how they purposefully aim to engage BME students in those. In the Learning Environment section, Kingston describes cross-university working groups that offer:

a more connected, innovative student life cycle approach rather than a transactional approach to higher education which may be appropriate for entrants from different social backgrounds to our diverse student intake.

Kingston's submission also address how their Employability Programme increased graduate employability, with specific reference to BME students. As they state:

BME Employability coaching aids the removal of real or perceived barriers to employability to employment.

Finally, even the SU submission for the TEF included mention of the BME attainment gap, specifically stating the Union:

has taken steps to hold the University and ourselves to account. Our approach in supporting this includes cultural awareness months, where the University's support has been comprehensive and positive.

Kingston's submission is not exceptional in its focus on diversity – Hertfordshire mentions diverse students, inclusion and/or BME students 50 times, KCL 34 times, Greenwich 33 times, Sheffield 28 times, UAL 27 times, De Montfort 25 times, Brighton 22 times, UCL 21 times, and Wolverhampton 21 times.

All the London and surrounding institutions analysed, regardless of international reputation and TEF score, took this holistic approach to engaging with BME and diverse students and explain their use of an inclusive education. This may reflect an awareness of [Access HE's recent reporting](#) that by 2030, three in four students at London universities will be ethnic minorities.

The holistic approach is in stark contrast to LSE's TEF submission, where BME ethnicity was mentioned only once (in Positive Outcomes for ALL – and the attainment gap is never mentioned), diverse students four times (to justifying low NSS scores in the Provider Context, and in the LSESU submission), and inclusion three times (in the first paragraph of Positive Outcomes for All). While this does not mean that LSE is not taking a holistic approach to engaging with inclusion and closing BME attainment gaps, it does demonstrate a lack of willingness to highlight the importance of explicitly engaging with inclusion and diverse students throughout all aspects of teaching excellence.

## Positive Outcomes for All

This section of the TEF submission reflects the one area that all institutions analysed discussed BME attainment gaps and initiatives to promote inclusion for diverse students and improve student success. While the TEF metrics for Positive Outcomes for All focus on employment or further study after graduation, many institutions moved beyond that narrow marker in their narratives. Those that focused on employability discussed how BME students' employability after graduation and detailed key initiatives that aim to help BME student succeed.

An example of this would be the University of Winchester. They write:

The University has established 2 funds to boost the employability of students from under-represented groups. A sum of £25, 000 is made available to support students from under-represented groups to participate in an Exchange or Erasmus opportunity. The Winchester Employability Fund, totalling £50, 000, is allocated to support engagement with placement or volunteering opportunities, as well as support for driving lessons and tests, and sitting GCSE Maths, English, and Science amongst under-represented groups.

Through the Widening Participation Evaluation Framework the University actively monitors student participation in its institution-wide initiatives – such as the Ambassador Scheme (for which see paragraph 17 above), WRAP (Winchester Research Apprenticeship Programme), and the Student Fellows Scheme. For example, over the 3 years (2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16) 42.4% of recruits to the Student Fellows Scheme were from deprived postcodes, only 1 Student Fellow has withdrawn from the University (98.2% continuation rate), 87.2% have achieved a 1st or 2.1, and of the 6 graduates who responded to the DLHE, 83% are in graduate employment or further study.

Those that moved beyond the TEF metrics to discuss positive outcomes for all as outcomes within studies (as well as beyond), explicitly address BME attainment gaps and attempts made to reduce them. An example of this is the University of Sheffield. Their TEF submission reads:

Annual review of our good honours data does not show evidence of significant fluctuations, and external examiners often comment that it is hard to get a good degree at the University. In line with the wider sector, though, there is an attainment gap between white and black and minority ethnic (BME) students. The University's WPREU and Student Support Services recently completed a research project on the 'BME Attainment Gap' and the findings are informing plans for action at all levels in the University. The recommendations are aimed towards supporting changes in institutional cultures, curriculum and pedagogy, and communicating with students.

Another example is UAL:

UAL reflects diversity in the curriculum in various ways. For example, the Inclusive Curriculum Project works with course teams during revalidation of courses to develop inclusive curricula. In workshops facilitated by Aisha Richards, Director of UAL's Shades of Noir programme for exploring issues of race and ethnicity, and Dr Deborah Gabriel from the British Black Academics Organisation, staff consider the student experience and the relationship between students' sense of identity in relation to aspects of the curriculum including how it reflects the diversity of the student body. Aisha Richards has co-authored, with National Teaching Fellow Terry Finnigan, a guide published by the HEA, Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum: an art and design practitioner's guide, thus supporting the diversity agenda more widely.

Our commitment to equality and diversity is evidenced in our UAL Attainment Programme: Learning for All. We have appointed Dr Gurnam Singh (Coventry University), a leading expert in diversity, equality and attainment, as Visiting Teaching Fellow and advisor to this programme. It focuses on quality and data; curriculum; staff development; and extracurricular student engagement.

The length of these examples are indicative of the level of details that universities go into the kind of work they are doing to ensure the attainment of all students. The narratives in this section are populated with detailed initiatives currently underway or in the planning stages (much of which is being funded by the Office for Students – see the next section for examples of these projects and what universities are doing).

### Values-Based Education

Five universities introduced the institution as being driven by a values-based education, and then explicitly linked those values to ethnicity, background, widening participation, diversity and / or inclusion. Some other universities did refer to values and missions, but did not link them to inclusion. These five universities that did are:

1. Canterbury Christ Church University
2. De Montfort University
3. King's College London
4. University of Portsmouth
5. University of West London

The language across these different values statements shift across universities, but offer an example of how focusing on values can be used to justify careful considerations of BME attainment gaps and creating inclusive education for diverse students.

The most emphatic values statement was in De Montfort's TEF narrative. It reads:

We passionately believe that universities should be, and are, a force for public good... we commit to helping all students to thrive irrespective of race, ethnicity or background... we are committed to transforming our students into outstanding graduates, equipped to succeed as global citizens.

The language is both emotive and aspiration by using such phrases as 'passionately believe' and 'thrive irrespective'. De Montfort links the notion of a university as 'a force for public good' (a bold declaration of missions in light of the current funding shortage from the public sector) to a commitment to helping all students. In using such language, these values becomes the aspirational measure by which all activities in teaching excellent are measured (which acts as a means to temper the metrics laid out by the OfS).

De Montfort was not the only university to use the language of the public good of universities as the stem of its values. CCCU writes that it aims 'to serve the common good' and that 'one manifestation of these values is our commitment to Widening Participation'. KCL states in a single sentence:

Our mission is to make the world a better place, and we are committed to an education that inspires students from all backgrounds and improves society.

And Portsmouth claims to 'delight in creating, sharing and applying knowledge to make a difference to individuals and society' before listing two of its values as:

Inspire and support staff and students to achieve their potential and meet the challenges of society; [and] respect and celebrate diversity and equal opportunity through an inclusive culture.

While UWL does not invoke a commitment to a wider good, they do still elude to core educational values and link them to inclusion. UWL uses the legal language of rights by referring to a belief that all students:

should have access to three transformative and fundamental rights: the right to enhancement, the right to inclusion, and the right to participation.

As stated above, the use of values-based education, referring to common goods, bettering the world, and students having educational rights offers an aspirational benchmark by which all university activity can be measured. These values allow for the link between a better society to an inclusive education with minimal (no) attainment gaps to be made explicitly and be well justified. After all, a better world is one where there are no differential outcomes based on race, ethnicity, or background.

This use of values is of particular interest for LSE in light of the School's new focus on values-based education. Specifically, Pro-Director (Education) Dilly Fung's LSE Education for Global Impact's pillar 'empowering all students' offers the aspirational marker that could fuel a dedication towards addressing BME attainment gaps at the School.

## Office for Students Funded Projects: Four Approaches

The amount of projects currently running across the United Kingdom to address the BME attainment gap is extensive. In 2017 alone, HEFCE (now OfS) funded 17 multi-institution bids to tackle BME attainment gaps. The largest of these projects is the Value-Added Metrics and an Inclusive Curriculum Framework project (detailed below) for £500,000 (the total funding for the project from the government plus the six investigating universities is £1.5 million). Additionally, the HEA (now AdvanceHE) in 2018 has funded two projects; one called '[Closing Attainment Gaps](#)', with 10 participating institutions of higher education, and the other '[What works in approaches to BME attainment gap](#)' with three partner universities.

This report focuses on four multi-institution OfS funded projects. Three of these are the largest projects that OfS is currently funded, and several overlap with the HEA 'Closing Attainment Gaps' project.

These projects were chosen for three reasons:

1. They are multi-institutional projects which allows for a consideration of how effective the projects are at closing attainment gaps across different institutional contexts.
2. They are on-going projects (all are at the half way point of its current iteration) meaning that they are working in the current sector-wide climate.
3. Each project works with a completely different theoretical / level approach. This allows for a comparison of possibilities to draw from when considering what LSE might implement to address its own BME attainment gaps. These four approaches are:
  - a. *Structural Approach*: This approach attempts to address attainment gaps by changing the structures revolving around curriculum design and review. They also assign high level accountability for these changes and lowering attainment gaps at the Faculty (Dean) level. By focusing on structures monitoring and approving curriculum, it ensure the artefacts of learning (including syllabi and assessments) are changed to be inclusive in nature.
  - b. *Personalised Learning Approach*: This approach involves redevising and valuing the personalised learning aspect of education in universities. Personal tutorial systems are prioritised as places where those with diverse ethnic backgrounds can be supported and increase the potential for high level achievement. This includes creating systems to support personal tutors, creating systems of recognition for personal tutorials, and offering academic line management.
  - c. *Everyday Racism and Implicit Bias Approach*: This approach involves making students and staff of implicit bias, stereotype threat and how these two interplay to create incidents of everyday racism and micro-aggressions which in turn can have an impact on attainment. This approach draws on social psychology and in-group / out-group threat. While train and events creating awareness are developed with departments to be disciplinary focused, they are extra / co-curricular.
  - d. *Individualised Post-Racial Approach*: This approach focuses on providing support for individual students – in this case, the attainment gap is understood as a lack of educational support and know-how on behalf of BME students. So support is provided specifically on how to succeed in higher education, without making reference to ethnicity. This approach focuses on key skills and preparing for assessments in key modules.

## Value-Added Metrics & an Inclusive Curriculum Framework

### Value-Added Metric

The on-going Office for Students (OfS) funded project, [‘Using Value-Added Metrics and an Inclusive Curriculum Framework’](#), uses a specific metric to understand the attainment gaps of BME students. Included in this project are: Kingston University London [Lead] University College London (UCL), University of Hertfordshire, University of Greenwich, University of Wolverhampton, and DeMontfort University. This project overlaps with the HEA [‘What works in approaches to BME attainment gaps’](#) project, which was developed to foreground social justice as a justification for addressing BME attainment gaps.

The project uses the degree outcomes of all graduates across the HE from the past five years to calculate ‘a statistically expected percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> / 2:1 degrees for any cohort of students’. They then compare this percentage with the actual attainment of the cohort, looking specifically at the attainment of BME students and white students. They look at both institutional level attainment gaps as well as the attainment gaps of specific schools / faculties / departments. This allows universities on the project to see the persistence of attainment gaps generally and specifically while gaining a picture of how those gaps shift (or do not shift in many cases) across cohorts.

The value that this metric has offered has been to demonstrate statistical significant attainment gaps for the institutions while pinpointing specific school / faculties / departments where gaps persist. For example, UCL has a persistent gap of between 3-4% each year, while UCL’s Bartlett School of Architecture has had a gap of 20%).

The universities on this project have then used the results of this Value-Added metric to implement an ‘Inclusive Curriculum Framework’ that aims to create structural change. Below, I use UCL specifically as a case study of what these institutions are doing.

### Case Study: UCL’s Inclusive Curriculum Framework

This project sets up a framework that offers a structural approach that is used through the curriculum, from the moment of conceptualising the curriculum for any given course through to the annual review process. Figure 1 is a representation of dimensions of teaching and learning that the framework applies to ensure the curriculum is ‘accessible, reflects students’ backgrounds, and prepares them to positively contribute to a global and diverse workplace.’

Teaching	Create an accessible curriculum	Enable students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum	Equip students with the skills to positively contribute to and work in a global and diverse environment
In the concept of the programme			
In the content of the programme			
In the delivery of the programme			
In the assessment			

In the feedback / forward			
In the programme review			

Figure 1: Inclusive Curriculum Framework as proposed by [‘Using Value-Added Metric and an Inclusive Curriculum Framework’](#) project.

In this section, I offer a look at what UCL is currently doing to address BME attainment gaps through their inclusive curriculum framework. This is simply an overview of the project – more information can be found in their [UCL Advancing Race Equality Toolkit](#).

#### *Advice and Support*

UCL offers support to those teaching across the university through several resources including the UCL Advancing Race Equality Toolkit, a conference for UCL staff on supporting BME student success, and workshops and events to help train staff to think about inclusion and diversity in their teaching and learning.

The UCL Advancing Race Equality Toolkit offers reflective advice on creating a learning space where students feel they belong (for example: create inclusive events, provide BME role models, assume personal responsibility, etc), the importance of an inclusive curriculum (with quotes from students about their disengagement with a solely white curriculum), guided marking, and then a list of case studies from UCL on targeted recruitment of academic staff (as BME representation at the academic level creates a more inclusive space for BME students).

The conference on supporting BME student success included presentations on closing the undergraduate attainment gap, the persistence of racism in higher education, and specifically the attainment gap in medicine. UCL has also offered workshops on understanding white privilege in higher education and what an inclusive curriculum looks like.

#### *Accountability and Pledges of Action*

UCL has made the Faculty Deans responsible for implementing the inclusive curriculum framework, and accountable for what is and is not achieved. The Deans have pledged to take action specific to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are inclusive. Specifically, as of 12 July 2018, each Faculty has pledged the following:

#### **Arts and Humanities:**

1. Appoint a senior academic with responsibility for race and equality
2. In collaboration with the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences and the Office of the Vice Provost Education, exploring the creation of a Centre for the Study of Race and Racism; with the Centre to be housed in the Institute of Advanced Studies.

#### **The Bartlett:**

1. Appointed a Vice Dean Equality, Diversity (Dr Kamna Patel) and Inclusion with a portfolio that covers, race, gender and other protected categories (the first in UCL).
2. Fully fund a percentage of the Bartlett’s Students as a means of addressing the widening participation issue with the main scheme to start in 2020. A significant proportion of these students will be from BME families.
3. Work through the Bartlett’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

4. Address the BME attainment gap is a priority.
5. Trial the Fair Recruitment Specialist scheme.
6. Implement the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme.

**Brain Sciences:**

1. The Deans of the School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS) Faculties are contributing funding via The Wellcome Trust to develop the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme within SLMS
2. A Faculty BME Attainment Lead has been appointed.
3. To consider utilising Fair Recruitment Specialists

**Engineering:**

1. Implement measures to address racial inequalities in student attainment by asking a colleague to help champion this by drawing best practice from our leading departments and sharing these examples broadly. This is a focus of the next Away day for the leadership team.
2. A Faculty BME Attainment Lead has been appointed.

**Institute of Education:**

1. A senior position with a portfolio that covers race equality has been created.
2. Participate in UCL's widening participation initiatives.
3. A Faculty BME Attainment Lead has been appointed.

**Laws:**

1. Participate in UCL's Widening Participation programme.
2. A Faculty BME Attainment Lead has been appointed.

**Life Sciences:**

1. The Deans of the School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS) Faculties are contributing funding via The Wellcome Trust to develop the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme within SLMS.
2. A Faculty BME Attainment Faculty Lead has been appointed.

**Maths and Physical Sciences:**

1. Appoint an Equalities and Diversity Champion as part of the leadership team
2. Trial the Fair Recruitment Specialist scheme.
3. Implement the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme.
4. A Faculty BME Attainment Lead has been appointed.

**Medical Sciences:**

1. The Deans of the School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS) Faculties are contributing funding via The Wellcome Trust to develop the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme within SLMS.
2. Appoint a Vice Dean Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
3. Create an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
4. A BME Attainment Faculty Lead has been appointed.

**Population Health Sciences:**

1. The Deans of the School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS) Faculties are contributing funding via The Wellcome Trust to develop the Inclusive Advocacy Scheme within SLMS.



2. Trial Fair Recruitment Specialists from autumn 2018 with an absolute recommendation of BME representation on recruitment panels as far as possible.
3. Revise governance of the Faculty EDI committee to ensure a direct link to the Faculty Executive Committee.

**Social and Historical Sciences:**

1. In collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Office of the Vice Provost Education, exploring the creation of a Centre for the Study of Race and Racism; with the Centre to be housed in the Institute of Advanced Studies.
2. A BME Attainment Faculty Lead has been appointed.

*Inclusive Curriculum Health Check*

UCL has also developed an '[Inclusive Curriculum Health Check](#)' as a part of the Annual Student Experience Review process for all degree programs. This Health Check aims to 'support UCL staff to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle.' The document includes areas of reflection on Content, Teaching and Learning, and Assessment.

Specifically, it asks:

To what extent does your programme curriculum

- Create opportunities to discuss different perspectives within and outside the UK related to ethnic diversity?
- Use materials that explores different data, models, and theories related to ethnic diversity, event within a historical context?
- Have reading lists and resources that contain a diverse range of authors including those from different ethnicities, from outside the UK, and from non-academic sources where relevant?
- Develop Students' critical thinking and awareness of different perspectives on issues relating to diversity in ethnicity, culture, and nationality?
- All students to gain an understanding of how different factors e.g. social, economic, ethnicity influence outcomes and perspectives?

To what extent does your programme

- Have an engagement strategy that follows up on those not attending or engaging?
- Ensure that allocation of students to small group work enables the creation of ethnically diverse groups from different educational backgrounds?
- Encourage discussion from students with diverse backgrounds and include topics where personal experience and views are expressed?

To what extent does your programme

- Offer a variety of forms of assessments ensuring that all students have the change to practise new forms of assessments?
- Offer formative assessments before all summative assessments ensuring that all students have the chance to practise new forms of assessments?
- Offer individualised and peer feedback?
- Offer opportunities for students to reflect on feedback and marks?
- Involve students in the formative and summative annual review of your programme looking at content and attainment from an ethnic diversity perspective.

## Conclusion

The detailed level of this particular project reflects the level of work and activity needed to take a structural approach to address BME attainment gaps.

While this section goes into detail on UCL's interventions in creating an inclusive curriculum framework, all the universities involved in the project have taken equally intensive measures. [Hertfordshire](#), for example, has also created an inclusive health check that is reflective in nature, offered wide variety of events (including BME attainment gap conferences), and created channels of accountability. Their [curriculum design toolkit](#) is of particular interest in terms of how it uses a digital interface to create more complex means of reflexivity on the part of programme directors and course conveners.

A video on Kingston's approach is available on [YouTube](#).

## Raising Awareness, Raising Attainment

[Raising Awareness, Raising Attainment](#) (RARA) is an on-going OfS funded project that aims to raise BME and Low Socioeconomic Status (LSES) attainment gaps through expansion and redeveloping of the personal tutoring system. The project includes the University of Sheffield [Lead], Kings College London (KCL), and the University of Portsmouth. RARA highlights that while improving access to HE is important, it alone does not reduce attainment gaps once these students are in university, and that even controlling for tariff entry points, attainment gaps persist. Therefore, RARA aims to:

1. Explore deeper issues related to attainment gaps, through the pedagogical relationships students have with those teaching in universities,
2. Foster students' feeling of belonging and entitlement to the support available throughout their academic studies.

## Interventions

Because RARA focuses on the relationship between students and academic staff as well as feelings of belonging, the interventions researched revolve around the personal tutoring systems at the three institutions. Specifically, Sheffield, KCL and Portsmouth have:

- Redesigned their personal tutoring, including the creation of online platforms to track and enhance student progression and attainment. While the KCL's platform is fully password protected, [Sheffield](#) and [Portsmouth](#) make their support sections publicly available.
- Create Senior Tutor posts where key *academic* staff are accountable for the personal tutoring within each faculty / school / department.
- Created specific policies and principles revolving around personal tutoring and provide staff CPD initiatives to improve the provision.
- Embedded personal tutoring in the training and development activities within the training and development activities of each university, such as their accreditation frameworks for HEA Fellows and their postgraduate certificates in higher education teaching through require modules.

- Made monitoring of attainment gaps part of institutional key performance indicators.

RARA has also created a sector wide pledge asking those working in higher education to achieving a 0% attainment gap, stating that 0% is the only acceptable gap. While these pledge has no accountability associated to it, it does create both an awareness across the sector of the issue regarding attainment gaps and an aspirational goal for the entire sector to reach. Associated with the pledge are badges with RARA that staff at universities can wear in order to draw attention to the issue.



Figure 2: RARA Badge

### Interim Findings

The project reached its halfway point during the summer of 2018. At this point, the interim findings indicate that by having a *holistic* approach to redeveloping the personal tutoring system is both decreasing the size of the attainment gaps.

For the faculties and schools using the online platforms *and* providing key CDP training, including embedding that in HEA Fellowship initiatives, attainment gaps have reduced (though remain at a statistically significant level). The role of the Senior Tutor also seems to have created both a sense of importance and value to personal tutoring as well as a line management chain that both staff and students can use to better address any issues that may arise in personal tutoring. Also, interviews and focus groups with BME students have demonstrated an increased sense of community and belonging as many feel their personal tutors ‘have my back’.

For schools and departments that only engaged through the use of the online system, there has been no statistical shift in the different attainment gaps. This seems to imply that it is the hands on work, training, and accountability for personal tutoring that has caused the shift.

Much more information about the projects ongoing findings as well as detailed descriptions on the interventions including conference presentations can be found on the [RARA website](#).

### Changing Mindsets: Reducing Stereotype Threat and Implicit Biases

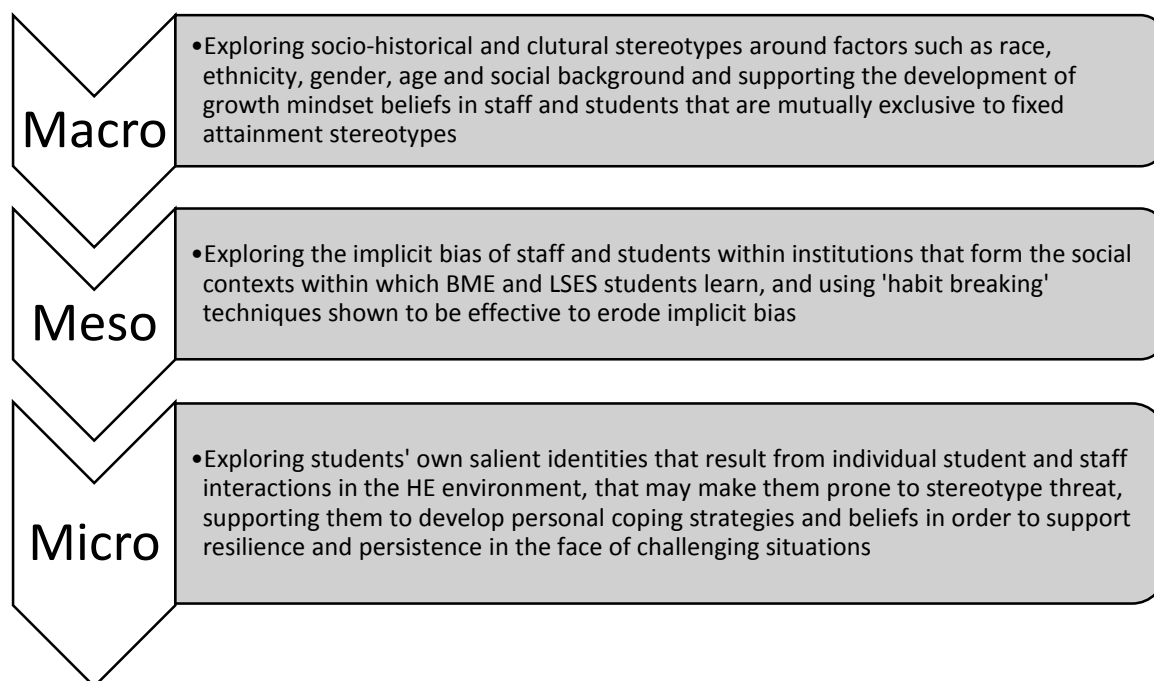
The ongoing OfS funded project ‘[Changing Mindsets: Reducing Stereotype Threat and Implicit Biases as Barriers to Student Success](#)’ aims at addressing BME attainment by devising department specific training to creating awareness of implicit bias that influence BME and working class students, and through this awareness, change perspectives and actions. Included in the project are the University of Portsmouth [Lead], University of the Arts London (UAL), University of Winchester, and University of Brighton.

The project attempts to address unequal student experience and outcomes for both BME and LSES students using the concept of in-group and out-group psychology. Specifically, it works from the perspective that unintentional bias is thought to be a key contributor to a wide variety of intergroup disparities in higher education and negative interpersonal interactions (such as micro-aggressions). Therefore the institutions involved in the project use a wide variety of training and CPD interventions to attempt to develop a ‘growth mindset’ among both staff and students to mitigate the negative interpersonal interactions and implicit biases. This is thought to reduce stereotype threat.

### Interventions

The project uses a variety of intervention workshop custom design for specific schools / departments throughout the institutions. These focuses on addressing the impact of stereotype

threat and implicit bias by focusing on macro, meso, and micro levels. Their framework, as presented in their [mid-project report](#), for the macro, meso, and micro foci are:



Using this framework, the project set out five learning outcomes for these workshop style interventions. Participants would have improved understanding of:

1. Their own mindset
2. The interaction between stereotype threat, implicit bias, and mindset
3. The impact of their own and others' mindset on their own and others' behaviour, language use, and expectations
4. The impact of behaviour, language use, and expectations on learning and educational outcomes
5. Strategies for developing their growth mindset, inclusive behaviours, high expectations for all and enabling language.

For specific examples of all the different bespoke workshops and events that the project has put on at all the partner institutions (they are a wide diversity of events designed to match the audience and build from the specific disciplinary contexts), it is worth visiting the [Changing Mindsets Blog](#).

### Interim Findings

The Changing Mindset project reached its halfway point in the summer of 2018. Its means of evaluating its interventions' impacts is by comparing pre-intervention and post-intervention data.

The initial project findings show that using average institutional attainment gaps hides key variations around attainment, and seems to reach the same conclusion that the Value-Added Metric project did as well. Changing Mindsets suggests looking at gaps by tariff point achievement, and to look at subject specific areas within universities, as there can be great variation across the different disciplines.

The project has used surveys to collect data on workshop participants, and have found that almost all staff and students were 'committed to speaking out against hate and making their fellow students feel welcome and a part of the community' as a result of the training. However, most staff *and*

student attendees also admitted to ‘unintentionally stereotyping thoughts’. This could be a particular issue that staffs have these thoughts as it could have implicit effects on classroom interactions, curricular choices, and assessment design and marking.

For a detailed look at the Changing Mindsets project, read their 149 page [mid-project report](#).

### Student Attainment Project

The [Student Attainment Project](#) (SAP) is led by the University of Derby (SAP1), and has extended to include Southampton Solent University and the University of West London (UWL) (SAP2). It aims at closing the undergraduate ‘good honours’ BME attainment gap at the university. This was driven by an institutional attainment gap of 28.2% for Derby in 2012 and 25% for UWL in 2015. The project works from the perspective that there is no single ‘magic bullet’ to driving down attainment gaps at Derby. Rather, they use a wide variety of interventions working from a ‘post-racial’\*, inclusive approach. They also evaluated their BME attainment gaps not just at programme level (or departmental level), but also looked the gaps at module level.

**\*Note:** The post-racial approach has continued receive widespread criticism in the USA context for hiding institutional racism by erasing how race / ethnicity underpins attainment and educational disparities (read more from [T. Howard](#), [K. Bhopal](#), [S. Harper](#), and [T. Wise](#)). It feeds into an individual responsibility and deficit model of addressing attainment where it is viewed that BME students need fixing, rather than the institutions.

### Interventions

Most of the interventions associated with SAP (at Derby and UWL) focus on providing extra support for BME students rather than addressing institutional issues or focusing on academic staff and all students. This is not surprising considering the post-racial approach SAP takes, and seems to validate the critiques from USA universities. The aim is to fix students rather than fix the institution. Having said that, this does not mean that the interventions are ‘bad’ – simply that they are bolt-on rather than embedded into programme design and the curriculum.

The project interventions claim to work across the following domains:

1. Learning
2. Relationships
3. Cultural and social capital
4. Psychosocial and identity

Derby created a Programme Health Check that is a part of all programme design and review similar to UCL’s Inclusive Curriculum Health Check. However, the Derby check list is less extensive, and does not have space for programme directors to reflect qualitatively on the level of inclusion their programmes have built it.

Derby has also created an expansive set of online resources called PReSS (Practical Recipes for Student Success) for students and case studies of good practice to offer guidance for departments as they develop new modules and review existing ones. The PReSS online pack is are ‘recipe cards’ for specific actions students can take to raise their own attainment. Examples of what the recipe cards address are:

- Digital literacy
- Improving student confidence
- Professional behaviours for placement students

- Using Feedback

For a full list of the recipes and to see details regarding the guidance they offer, all the details are available on the [PReSS blog](#).

UWL did similar interventions that focused on remedial work with BME students rather than address institutional and structural issues. Specifically, UWL:

- Provides a checklist for students to work through prior to submitting assessments.
- Provides top tips for exam preparation, during the exam, and reflection for future exams.
- Gives students an overview of the main issues to consider when writing a paper while providing advice on how to approach the process.

Southampton Solent University does not publically make available the specific interventions they have engaged in as part of the SAP2 project.

### Monitoring Attainment Gaps

Unlike other institutions, the SAP monitoring of attainment gaps is focused the module level rather than programme, department, faculty, or university level. They then link accountability to close attainment gaps to specific modules rather than being focused on programmes. The justification for this is that the interventions are at modular level (attached to specific exams and essay assessments).

[UWL's initial results](#) indicate that there has been a reduction of the attainment gap for the piloting modules across the board, though the degree of the drop is hugely varied. The smallest reduction was an attainment gap drop from 22.85% (2016) to 22.05% (2017) for a module in the School of Computing and Engineering (the published results do not state whether this was statistically significant). The largest reduction was for a module in the School of Law and Criminology: from a 15.55% (2016) attainment gap to a 3.87% (2017) gap.

The published results (only available for UWL) do not investigate if there was an overall attainment gap drop for these programmes or if the gap reduction was contained to the intervening modules. This would offer a better understanding if students were transferring the learning from one module to the next.

The next stage of the project involves replicating these interventions looking at other attainment gaps, including gender, disability, and socio-economic background. It will be interesting to see if their means of intervention would be any different for other groups in light of their student-centred, post-racial approach that pretends to not see race.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are not in an order of priority – rather they are consecutively: in what order these initiatives should be taken. These recommendations are a balance between the different approaches that universities in the United Kingdom are currently taking – between structural, personal learning, social psychology, and a post-racial individualised approach. I would caution *not* to simply do one initiative. And I would also insist that any action be tempered by research on what may be contributing to the BME attainment gaps at LSE. This research would lead to much more nuanced and School specific recommendations.

No matter what action the university takes, my primary recommendations would be one: to **conduct research on the underlying, everyday issues that BME students experience at LSE** in order to understand contributing factors leading to the BME attainment gap; and two: to **take a structural approach** to addressing these issues.

1. *Research the underlying issues that may be contributing to the BME attainment gap at LSE:* This should move beyond metrics and attainment gaps to gain a better understanding of the experiences of BME students and staff at LSE. By having this qualitative data, any action (ideally multiple levels) taken by the School. There are complex experiences and issues around BME attainment gaps that the number do not reveal. These need to be made visible to see the level of what is contributing to a gap. The University of Amsterdam [Diversity Commission's](#) methodology used for their '[Let's Do Diversity](#)' report offers an in-depth, methodologically robust research underpinned by decoloniality and intersectionality. By taking this approach it uncovered areas of exclusion at the university as well as the discriminatory experiences of multiple populations. The University of Amsterdam's study is only one of many examples of institutional level research that could allow the School to take appropriate and meaningful action. **The research currently being conducted at LSE by Dr Suki Ali and Dr Nabila Munawar may provide these kind of insights.** The remaining recommendations should be tempered by the results of any such institutional research.
2. *Monitor annually BME attainment gaps both at institutional level and departmental level and make them publicly available:* One commonality of all the projects and of all the universities engaged in actively reducing / eliminating attainment gaps is annual monitoring which are made **publicly available**. While different institutions monitor at different levels (module, programme, department, or faculty level), all of them publish the gaps. This creates an accountability to continually address them. Whether these based on the 'value-added' metric or broken up according to entry tariffs depends on how the School chooses to conceptualise the problem. However, it is the transparency that will create a clear need to continually reduce the gaps.
3. *Explicitly link a values-based education to eliminating BME attainment gaps:* Because the School is set to adopt a values-based education around 'LSE Education for Global Impact', this offers an opportunity to create an aspirational benchmark regarding attainment gaps. This would be in line with other universities that also work from values. This would create a School-wide accountability to act upon those values.
4. *Name specific senior members of staff as being accountable for closing BME attainment gaps within each department:* At many universities, specifically those involved in the Value-Added Metric project, these are the Deans of Faculties. However, due to the structure of the School, these roles do not exist. Equivalent roles for LSE might be Heads of Department. By naming high level members of departments, and academics, as being accountable for closing the gaps, this ensures that any form of action will be measured, analysed, and

embedded within the specific departments. This also creates transparency both within and beyond the School by listing these names.

5. *Implement an inclusive curriculum framework for programme review and new programme design:* This will automatically create a system in which all programmes will gradually have more inclusive curricula. In order to do this effectively, the framework should involve a reflective element that requires convenors and directors consider how these different elements of inclusion are being implemented. Also, it would need to be a mandatory part of review, with support for both implementation and embedding from the LSE Teaching and Learning Centre. This could be tied to work already underway on assessment diversification and programme review. Both UCL and Hertfordshire's frameworks could be analysed and adapted to match the LSE context.
6. *Explore how LSE's Academic Mentors can be used to create the type of personalised learning that can potentially close attainment gaps:* LSE has already done extensive work to attempt to bolster the role of Academic Mentors. This includes the responsibilities of Academic Mentors in the Academic Code along with the development of the Academic Mentorship Portal for both students and staff. Training on addressing personalised learning support specifically to give BME students a stronger sense of community and support could let this particular active currently underway at the School also be able to address attainment as well. This could link to stereotype risk training and how to act when racial bias may be taking place in a way that supports BME students. Also, several universities have looked at the importance of having BME mentors available for BME students (a good example of this would be the University of Brighton's work detailed in their TEF narrative). This does not require starting from the scratch, but would build on what the School has already done.
7. *Monitor both which students come to LSE LIFE and how attending these sessions influence their overall attainment:* While the research highlights the deeply problematic issues around a post-racial approach to addressing attainment gaps by inadvertently making the students the problem rather than the institution, it may be worth noting is LSE LIFE is having an possible impact on attainment gaps. Much of the work that takes a post-racial approach from Derby, UWL and Solent replicates what LSE LIFE already does for the institution. Therefore, rather than create a redundant programme for BME students, it would make sense to add to the monitoring of LSE LIFE to see if this skills development approach is having any impact on attainment.



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