

# Closing the undergraduate BME attainment gap

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# Overview

- Attainment at UCL
- The UCL BME attainment gap project
- Where are we now and where do we want to be?



# What are the potential causes of the gap?

- Lack of diversity and representation in the curriculum
- Lack of belonging in institutions and feeling isolated
- Lack of strategic leadership in addressing related issues
- Implicit / unconscious bias
- Racism in the form of institutional racism, discrimination and micro aggressions.
- Lack of diversity in staff and limited role models

# Impact of the BME attainment gap

National research shows:

- Increasing numbers of students are likely to be affected - nationally nearly 20% of students are from BME backgrounds and this is likely to rise.
- A less positive experience of higher education for BME students which may put students off from applying to particular institutions.
- Students less likely to become academics when there is a clear need to increase the pool of BME UK academics.
- Many graduate entry level jobs or training schemes require a minimum 2:1 degree – BME graduates are less likely to benefit from such opportunities.

# Project Overview

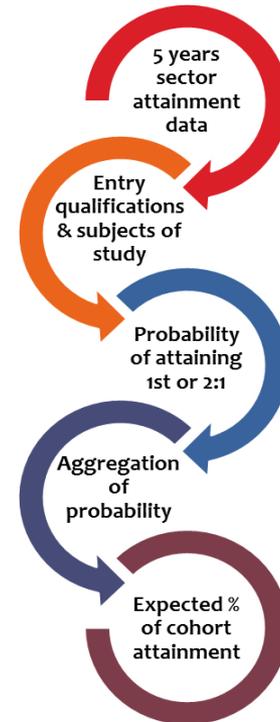
- A history of researching attainment at UCL
- Education Strategy 2016 - 2021
- An institutional approach – bringing together existing work and projects.
- Tools and resources needed to address common questions, challenges and doubts.
- Students are more engaged and vocal about BME attainment and this is positive.

# Project overview

- Kingston University led HEFCE Project: Value Added data and Inclusive Curriculum Framework.
- Using data to identify specific issues and when these occur during the degree programme: is the attainment gap visible in year 1 of the degree or later?
- Changing organisational culture and staff attitudes through training.
- Providing a framework for developing a more inclusive curriculum
- Developing leadership appointments in faculties to focus on attainment
- Working closely with the UK BME undergraduate community and the Students' Union to achieve change

# Measuring the gap: Value Added data

- The VA metric highlights differences in attainment which cannot be explained by student entry qualifications or subject of study.
- Uses the actual degree outcomes of all students graduating across HE in the last five years to calculate a statistically expected percentage of 1st or 2:1 degrees for any cohort of students.
- This can then be compared with the actual attainment of that cohort.



# Attainment at UCL

- As expected, all UCL students perform well above the sector benchmark.
- 96% of white students and 93% of BME students achieved a good degree.
- At an institutional level, there is a gap of 3% in 2016/17. Given the relative population sizes this is probably statistically significant.
- There was a gap of 4% in 2015/16 and 4% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2013/14.
- National Student Survey results also highlight areas where some BME students show lower levels of satisfaction.

# What does an Inclusive Curriculum look like?

- A curriculum that is accessible in terms of concept, content delivery and assessment
- For example, case studies or examples are taken from a range of different perspectives.
- Reading lists include a diverse range of authors and where relevant non-academic perspectives.
- Students from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to use their personal experiences and perspectives.
- This might be in small group work or seminars or discussion forums.
- Assessments are varied and students have formative assessment opportunities

# An Inclusive Curriculum at UCL

- Based on a successful intervention at Kingston we have developed an Inclusive Curriculum Health Check for programmes.
- This will be part of the Annual Student Experience Review and will be an opportunity for programme directors to reflect on where they are now.
- The ASER will require a development and enhancement plan, times lines for completion and who is responsible for delivery. Students are involved in the ASER. The actions will be part of the annual academic review of programmes.
- There will also be supplementary workshops about developing a more inclusive curriculum for areas where this is more of a challenge, plus a resource bank with examples.

# Where are we now?

NSS data shows greater dissatisfaction from BME students

VA data shows a small but significant attainment gap for UK BME students

Lack of staff awareness or understanding of the BME attainment gap.

Curriculum that is variably inclusive

Lack of staff confidence in dealing with curriculum material relevant to BME groups

Lack of staff knowledge and skills to underpin the creation of inclusive curricula

Lack of support for and no record of BME students who experience racist behaviour but are reluctant to report incidents

# What are we going to do?

## Staff

- Set up a working group ✓
- Appoint BME Attainment Faculty Leads
- Raise awareness of the project e.g. BME attainment conference ✓
- Develop tailored resources and training to support staff
- Roll out our Inclusive Curriculum Health Check for all programmes and action plans

## Students

- Set up a student reference group
- Co-create a more inclusive curriculum – Curriculum Consultation Panel
- Address issues around informal complaints of racist behaviour towards BME students
- Celebrate BME student success and promote role models
- Pilot interventions that BME students feel will provide appropriate support

# Where do we want to be in 3 years time?

Improved BME student satisfaction: measured by NSS

Eliminate attainment gap for UK BME students: measured by VA data

Increased staff awareness of the BME attainment gap: measured by staff engagement

There is a forum or space to discuss attainment gap issues

Curriculum that is more inclusive: measured by ASER and annual academic review, programme evaluations

Staff are confident that they are creating inclusive learning environments

BME students feel confident that racist behaviour will not be tolerated at UCL and that if they report an incident it will be dealt with appropriately.

Thank you for listening.

Any questions?

