



# Identifying the problem – using data to find out where the gaps are at UCL

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# Overview

- The BME attainment gap at UCL
- What we 'used to do'
- Challenges during our journey
- Our findings and what we did next
- Advice from the other side



# What is the BME attainment gap?

According to the Equality Challenge Unit:

**“the difference in ‘top degrees’ – a 1<sup>st</sup> or a 2:1 classification – awarded to different groups of students”**

- The biggest differences in achievement is found by ethnic background.
- Data for England from 2015/16 show that there is a gap between the proportion of white students achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 classification for their degree (78.8%) compared to UK-domiciled students from minority ethnic groups (63.2%) of 15.6%
- The gap is NOT this large at UCL and other Russell groups universities – where there are very high entry criteria.

# What we 'used to do'

- Annual review (became ASER) 2015/16
- Low visibility
- Not a strategic priority
- Seen as a 'box-ticking' exercise
- No attempt to understand or draw attention to the gap institutionally

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# VA Data and it's benefits

- OfS (HEFCE) funded
- Based on VA data model developed by Kingston
- Compares proportions of students achieving a good degree against their 'expectations'
- Adjusts for prior attainment and subject studied

Dashboard 1: UCL University-wide Value Added scores by Year and Ethnicity

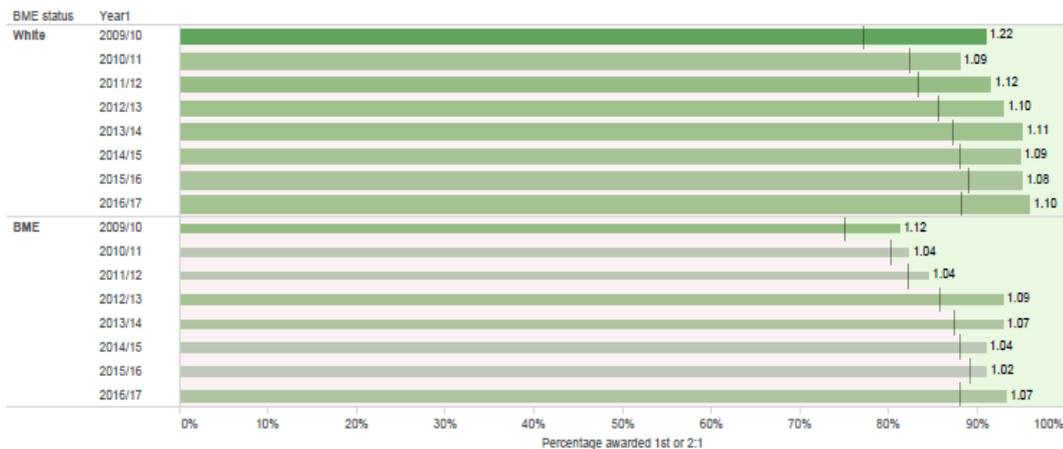
This dashboard allows us to compare the VA scores across the university by the major ethnic groups

Value Added Colour Key  
0.50 1.50



Bar widths reflect numbers: hover over the bars to get details  
Only Home students are represented in data

## Ethnicity





# Limitations of the VA approach

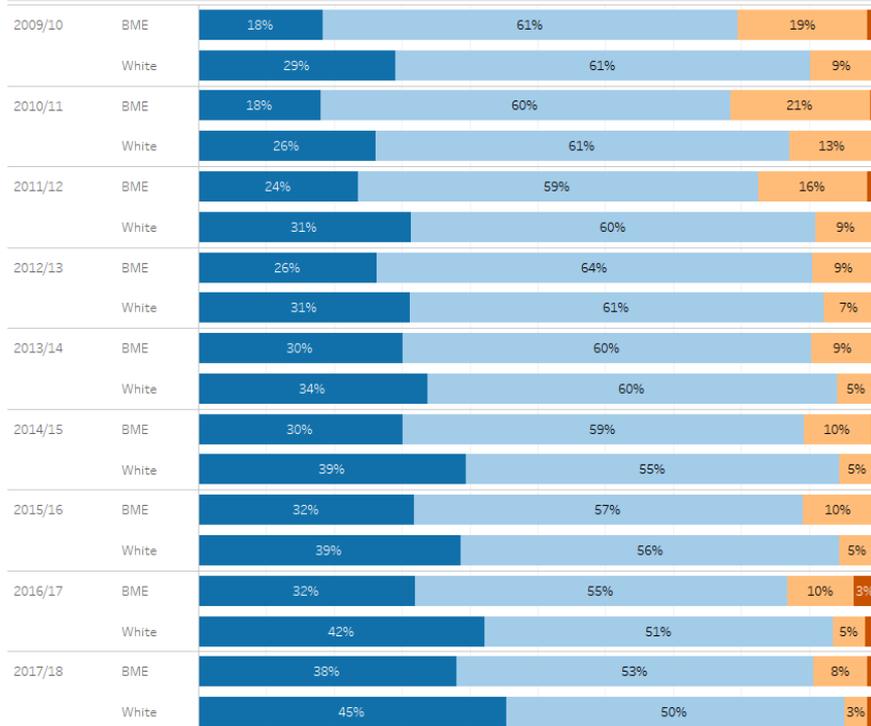
- Data took several months to compile to specifications
- Good degree is a blunt instrument
- High tariff student intake at UCL
- Good way to start the conversation but we needed to go further
- Hard to explain to people!



# Looking deeper – final marks and classifications

- Data looking at all students over ten years by demographics
- Final mark /100 and degree classifications
- Academic involvement (the experts!)
- Compelling outcomes, ‘more to the story’
- Building a picture of attainment in the round

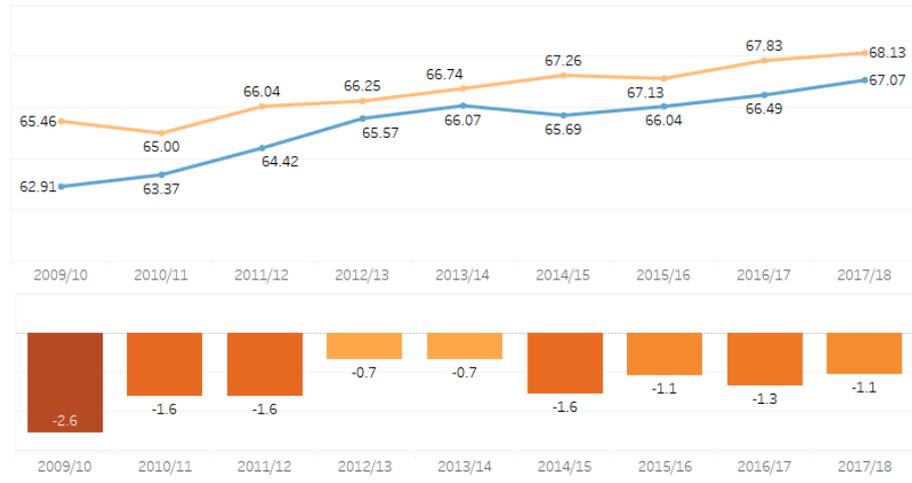
### What proportions of students achieved each degree class in each academic year since 2009?



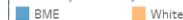
Colour key - degree class



### Average final mark trend and attainment gap



Colour key - ethnicity

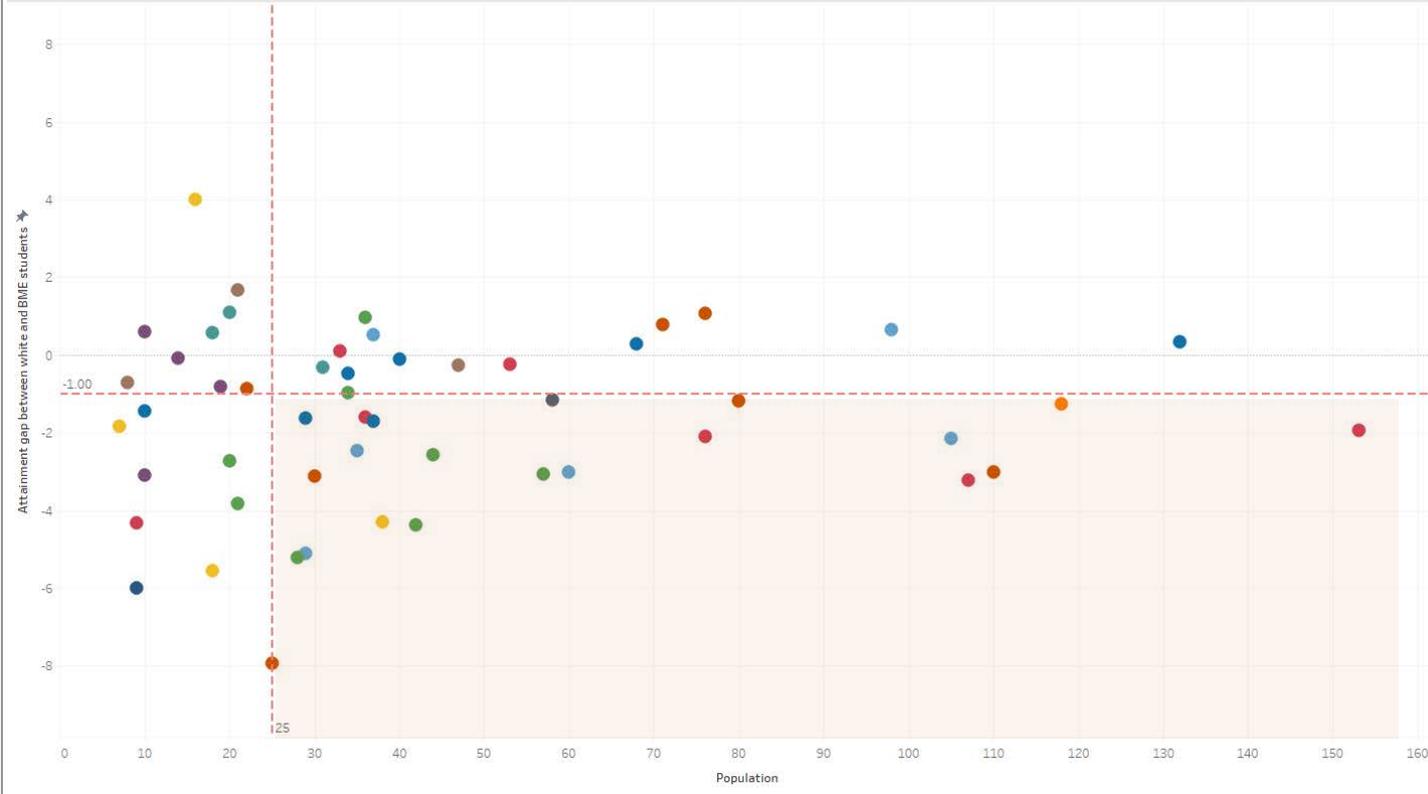


# Our findings

- Most recent gap is 4.7% (good degree)
- Gap found to be statistically significant every year
- Biggest gap at UCL in STEM subjects
- Biggest gap between students achieving firsts
- Black students smallest group and biggest gap (vs white students 11%)
- Disability, age and gender are all compounding factors

### Size of cohort vs attainment gap

Lower right quarter is risk zone (larger population and higher attainment gap)





## Practical advice on using the data

- Protect student anonymity (replace identifiers)
- Agree terminology, scope and criteria (e.g. years, BAME or BME, international/home)
- Reporting groups – set a minimum
- Dissemination – what works for you? Tableau, Excel, other data vis tool

## Beyond the data

- BME attainment working group
- Faculty leads
- Disseminating the results
- Race Equality charter mark
- Senior sponsors
- BME attainment conference April 2018



# Embedding the solutions

- ASER mandated action and Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Process
- Race Equality Charter mark
- Commitment from senior staff
- Inclusive Curriculum Health Checks
- Talk about race



## Advice from the 'other side'

- Get a data analyst involved in the project
- Be prepared for delays and setbacks
- Use the data strategically but don't let it 'be all and end all'
- Get senior sponsorship early
- Communicate the urgency
- Embedding closing the gap in processes
- Forming good habits early (with new programmes, e.g.)



# Group discussions

If you were to implement this project at your institution:

- Do you have the infrastructure to allow you to do this?
- How would you take it from a one-off to embedding it in processes?
- What approach would you take

If you have implemented work on closing the gap at your institution:

- What approach did you take?
- What were the main barriers and successes?

Share with the group



Thank you for listening.

Any questions?

