Final Report

(To be completed by projects funded by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement and Innovation Fund 2019-20)

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1. **Project title**

An investigation into BAME attainment, exploring the factors that impact on low grades of BAME students at the University of Northampton.

2. **Project aims and objectives**

   Please use the table below to provide information on the intended aims and objectives of your project (the ones stated in your project proposal) and the aims and objectives that have been achieved.

Intended aims and objectives	Achieved in full?	Comments
To understand BAME students' experiences at UoN	Yes	The in-depth interviews from all groups interviewed throughout this research project highlighted the experiences of BAME students at UoN. This definitely led to a deeper understanding of these experiences from the perspective of staff and students
To examine the factors influencing their performances	Yes	Although interviews with university academic and support staff gave us some

Intended aims and objectives	Achieved in full?	Comments
		ideas of what they felt were some of the factors influencing the performance of BAME students, the interviews with the students themselves gave the best indication of the factors that influenced them based on their experiences.
To explore issues relating to low BAME attainment at UoN	Yes	From all interviews conducted, we were able to develop a better understanding of most the issues that relate to low BAME attainment, some of which is linked to the overall student experience, some linked to a large percentage of BAME students on a range of programmes not accessing support services, some to socio-economic background and some to the programme content and structure.
To explore the barriers impacting on their grades	Yes	Our interviewed with all participants, including staff and students helped us develop a better understanding of the barriers that impact on grades, these ranged from non-engagement in programme and/or module activity, students not being able to relate to course content to the impact of social and private lives on learning.
To explore ways to improve communication highlighting support service available to students	Yes	By interviewing and talking to a range of support staff, both academic and pastoral, academics and students, we were able to better understand some of the gaps in communication with BAME students. This helped to demonstrate the need for better communication strategies of support services provided, and how students can feel comfortable in accessing them.

3. **Project outputs and deliverables**
   Please use the table below to provide information on your project's outputs and deliverables (the ones stated in your project proposal) and the outputs and deliverables that have actually been achieved.

Intended outputs and deliverables	Achieved in full?	Comments
An awareness of the factors influencing attainment gap at UoN with key recommendations	Yes	We were able to generate some very positive discussion and conversations about the attainment gap at the University of Northampton, bringing about greater awareness of the true impact of this on students from BAME communities. It was clear that there was a lot more behind the statistics. It was important to us to use a qualitative research method approach with our participants. From our activities we were able to bring about a deeper awareness of the factors hopefully helping us to define our present and future.
Evidence of interventions and activities from areas of study that demonstrate real impact in reducing the attainment gap!	Yes	From our research activities we were able to identify some activities taking place in some departments and/or programmes that demonstrated real impact in reducing the attainment gap. However, it is clear that a lot of work needs to be done in order to effectively and positively impact on the attainment gap across the university.
A published article	In progress	In development, however, we presented our findings to various groups including the student union, members of the university leadership team, The UoN BAME Network, and various academic staff.
A project site with evidence of action and desk, qualitative research, and online resources including videos	Yes	A regularly updated site of the project capturing progress is available on https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/uonattainmentgap/

4. Project evaluation

Please use this space to provide information on the methods that you used for carrying out an evaluation of the project, and the key findings and results from the evaluation.

The researchers used qualitative research methods for this investigation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with academics (7) from different faculties (BAME & Non-BAME), support staffs (3) from the LLS team. Focus groups were conducted with students belonging to UoN alumni network and current BAME students. Interviews were opinion-based, therefore subjective in nature. Most interviews were video, and/or audio recorded from the radio studio in Creative Hub; some staff chose to complete an electronic document with open

ended questions. The research team also conducted informal discussion with a range of staff and students.

Some of the key observations and findings are as follows:

- BAME students are not a homogenous group and it was clear that the BAME students all faced different challenges depending on the cultural group they represent. (Black British, Indian, Chinese, black African).
- "That is not me", student from some BAME cultural groups were reluctant to participate in the project because they felt that the attainment gap does not relate to, reflect, affect or impact them.
- While there is an attainment gap for all ethnic groups, it is consistently worst for Black (Black African/Black Caribbean/Other Black Background) students across the university.
- There are differences in attitudes to learning between various groups within the BAME student population. This was varied between subjects areas.
- There is a very negative impact/effect of commuting on attainment as a relatively large number of our students live in London and must travel regularly to Northampton to attend classes.
- Students feel that University is inclusive but Northampton as a town is not.
- Students sighted examples of what they felt was evidence 'microaggressions' targeted towards them prior to coming to UoN and during their time at UoN.
- There is a clear lack of BAME staff representation in most departments
- BAME students find it difficult to relate to the majority of course and module content. In some cases, students highlighted that they passively engage/d with some course content
- There is/was also the impact of negative prior learning experience on learning
- Academic support services not diverse in staff
- All staff who participated, highlighted the fact that the interview made them think and will help them reflect on their practice.
- The attainment gap is different amongst various cultural and social groups
- Through interviews and conversations with staff, the realisation of the value of 'white privilege' was mentioned on a few occasions

5. Project impact
Please use the table below to provide information on the intended impact and benefit of your project (the ones stated in your project proposal) and the impact and benefit that have been achieved.

Intended impact and benefit	Achieved in full?	Comments
Inform and facilitate the integration of the project results into the University policies and procedures in this area, ensuring that the voice of the affected is represented.	Yes	The project research leads have been invited to share their findings with key members of the university leadership team and various committee groups including ISEG and the EDI working group.
Inform a more effective inclusion and widening participation strategy	Yes	The project research leads have been invited to share their findings with key members of the university leadership team and various committee groups including ISEG and the EDI working group.
Provide a means of assessing & improving the 'student experience' through new knowledge and understanding of the needs of students from BAME backgrounds, identifying key barriers to the positive learning experience of BAME students.	Yes	By sharing our findings with all UoN stakeholders, it is our hope that this will lead to an improvement in the overall student experience, which in-turn will lead to better academic performance. The discussions with the students allowed us to understand the differences in student in front of us and where they are coming from which will help inform strategies for supporting them.

6. **Dissemination activities**

   Please use the table below to provide information on the dissemination activities that have been conducted and their impact.

Dissemination activities	Impact
L & T Conference UoN 2020	Poster presentation
BAME Staff Network	The findings of the study have been presented during the BAME staff network meeting
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	The findings of the study have been presented at the University EDI committee.
LLS	Scheduled for 3rd July 2020
Student Union	Presentation of project to SU BAME advocate and select group

Dissemination activities	Impact
Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean	Applied Social Studies

7. **Budget update**

   Please use this space to provide an update on your budget, in a suitable format, indicating aspects such as:
   - *Project underspend*
   - *Project overspend*
   - *Any other relevant aspects in relation to the budget*

Description	Employee Name	Days on project	Cost per day (£)	Total Cost (£)
PAY COSTS (list all staff - one line per employee)	Nathan Dodzo	9.5	226.44	2151.18
	Patrice Seuwou	9.5	226.44	2151.18
NON-PAY COSTS (i.e. production of posters or other outputs; hospitalities for events held at UN; attending conferences, etc. – one line per item)	Project research & promotion workshop and consultation sessions hospitality			
	Project Poster			0
	Project flyer			241
	Conference attendance UoN Learning and Teaching Conference 2020			0
TOTAL REQUESTED				4543.36
MATCH FUNDING FROM SCHOOL OR DEPARTMENT (if applicable)				828.00

Description	Employee Name	Days on project	Cost per day (£)	Total Cost (£)
TOTAL COST OF PROJECT				5371.36

8. Final reflections

Please use this space to add any other comments and reflections on your project, such as lessons learned.

"The numbers do not lie", and here we have significant racial disparities that simply cannot be ignored. This project allowed an opportunity for some meaningful and structured uncomfortable conversation. It gave us an opportunity as educators to better understand the challenges faced by our BAME student communities and how those challenges impact negatively on attainment. We were encouraged by the honest responses from all our participants, who also highlighted the importance of such open conversations and dialogue, and the manner in which it was conducted.

There were many benefits to this project, of which include some of the steps the University needs to take to reduce attainment gap are the following:

- Providing strong leadership: Analysing this BAME Attainment should not only be a tick box exercise. Commitment from leadership to effectively tackle this inequality. The university must genuinely take practical actions to tackle the problem. One action for example could be to submit an application for the Race Equality Charter (REC).
- The necessity and importance of open dialogue, making the uncomfortable comfortable, having conversations about race though formal & informal settings (e.g. organising book clubs in various faculties), and changing the culture of the institution.
- Developing racially diverse and inclusive environments, getting the evidence and analysing the data, understanding what works, supporting further research into attainment of specific groups within BAME.
- A move towards greater representation of 'real' BAME academic models (role models) for students to see and aspire to.
- More staff training and reflection around race, equality, justice, inclusion, diversity, understanding of microaggressions and bias/unconscious bias
- Working towards the decolonisation and internationalisation of the curriculum.
- Allowing ourselves time to understand the student in front of us and where they come from in order to better support them

However, in order for us to move forward as an institution, it begins with acknowledgement from all changemakers that there is a problem, then embracing the strategies for the implementation of effective solutions. We are an educational institution after all, let us begin by educating ourselves. By better understanding our past, we can better shape our present and future.

Please submit this final report to Ming.Nie@northampton.ac.uk no later than 30ᵗʰ June 2020. Please also make your final report available on your project blog.

We'll need a couple of weeks to assess your final report and proceed with the release of the final 50% of the fund to your Faculty before the end of the University's current financial year which is the end of July 2020. Thank you for your cooperation!